THE SMART SET

A Magazine of Cleverness

To Amuse, Not to Instruct

THE HOUSE OF MANY BOTTLES

GROWING PAINS

PAN PASSES NORTHWARD

A MAN'S MIND

THE SATANIC SAINT

THE BELIEVER

TWILIGHT ADVENTURE

AND MANY OTHER STORIES, POEMS, EPIGRAMS, ETC.

APRIL 1920

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THE SMART SET

A MAGAZINE OF CLEVERNESS

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Editor—J. W. MILNE

APRIL, 1920

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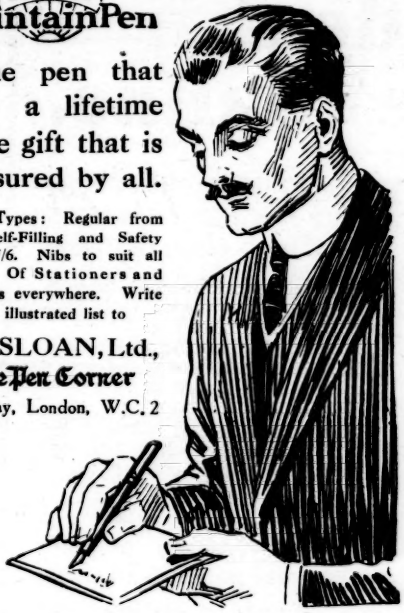

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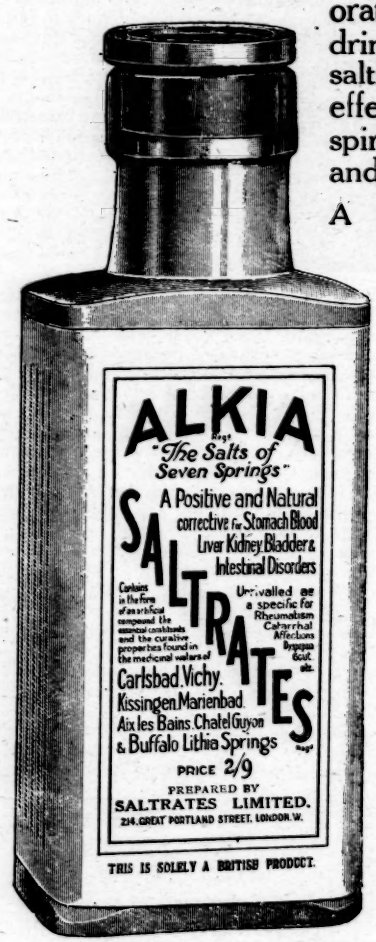
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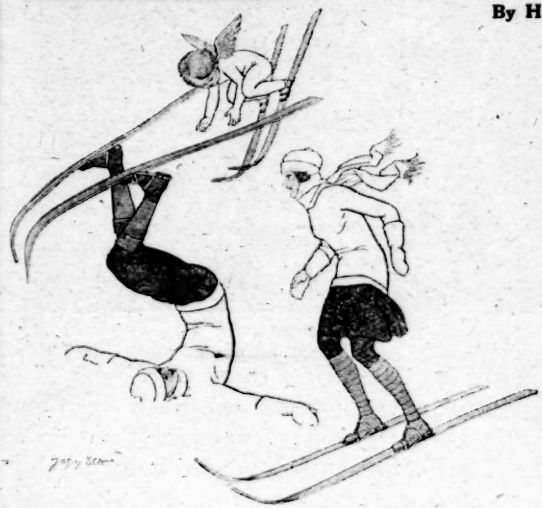

FIRST AID

IT is annoyingly unamusing to be compelled to write the obvious . . . and so I seldom write of clothes. But if one lives by, with, or on anything, one should be faithful to the subject sometimes.

There is a feeling that men's clothes are scandalously dear.

They are—so is everything else—and they will be dearer. Dearness is one of the "rare and refreshing fruits." of war, which makes everything dear, except life.

The price in blood having been paid, we have now to foot the material bill of costs. We are still spending a mere million or so a day more than our revenue, in order that we may enable our political and militaristic adventurers to make England a home fit for Neros to live in.

But I am again becoming unfaithful to my subject . . . clothes.

Before the war the Government made about one or two shillings out of every £1 nett profit made by Pope and Bradley. To-day, with increased taxation, excess profits tax, and last, but not least, the corner in raw material, the Government makes £2 to every £1 profit made by this House.

It must never be forgotten that the Government have cornered wool. They bought it cheaply and are selling it dearly, and admit to a profit of £60,000,000. Add to this profit a profit made out of the trader and the public, a colossal income tax, and an overspending of income by hundreds of millions, how is it possible to keep the price of good clothes down?

The Government are the profiteers, and the Government are forcing prices higher.

The prices of this House will shortly go up. And I advise those who deal here to take note of this.

They must go up, and keep up for a year or more.

At present the average charge for a really good Lounge Suit is from twelve to sixteen guineas—just about double pre-war—yet the best materials from which they are made cost me 160 per cent. more than in 1914. And they were bought (fortunately) nine months ago, and to-day's price in woollen materials is 260 per cent. advance on 1914.

If these materials were bought now—if they could be bought now—the price of a suit would have to be advanced from twenty to twenty-five guineas.

Compared with the present cost of women's clothes, men's are ridiculously cheap. I know, because I have to pay. For fifty guineas one buys a gown weighing little more than the leaves of Eve.

My desire is to endeavour to keep prices sane. I loathe this artificial inflation of values, which is so unsolid, and in a national sense, is so nearly akin to bankruptcy.

These notes are a cold mathematical statement of facts, which are written for the benefit of the clients of this House. Lounge Suits from £12 12s. od. Dinner Suits from £16 16s. od. Dress Suits from £18 18s. od. Riding Breeches from £5 15s. 6d.

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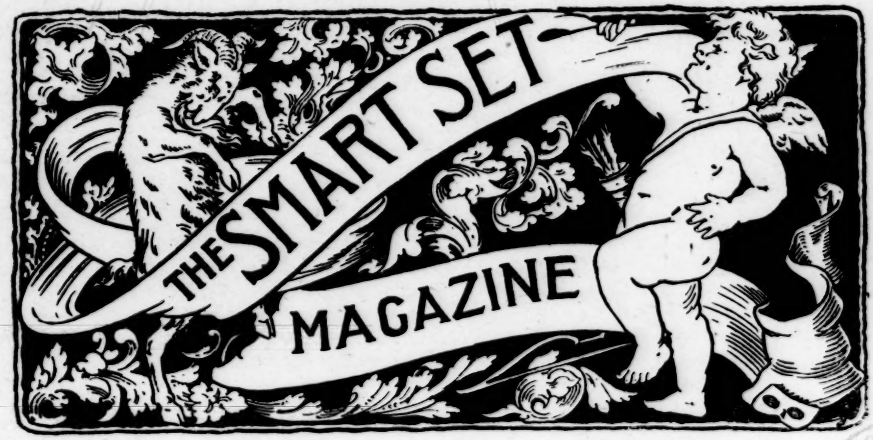

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THE HOUSE OF MANY BOTTLES

(A COMPLETE NOVELETTE)

By Clarkson Crane

In a canyon of the California coast range, where the road straightens itself after climbing a long hill, and before descending again, runs easily for a while on the level, there stands a house grey and empty, with broken windows and open door, into which few people have entered. The grass has grown up around the steps of the porch; one section of the roof gapes open; the sheds and barns all around are like fragile, hollow skulls; among the rags and yellow newspapers that cover floors on which people once moved, snakes have made their homes, and rustle away across the dry boards if anyone ventures inside the door.

There is some furniture left in the house, though much has been stolen; a three-legged sofa covered with torn cloth, which may once have been red; a few battered chairs tumbled over; an inverted table. In a window a bit of glass remains; and if one walks up the crackling staircase to the attic, there are scamperings and scratchings in corners and behind walls; birds flash away from the upper windows; and in the chinks of the roof one sees triangles, squares, circles of the profound blue sky.

Behind the house, away from the sour odour of the interior, but with a dry smell of its own, there is a dust-covered pile of empty bottles. The rains of years have washed away or obliterated most of the labels; the accumulation seems little more than a shabby heap with an occasional protruding neck or jagged edge. But on moonlight nights, with the silence of the hills all around, passers-by have noticed glimmers of light reflected from the glass, and seeing the naked shell of the house against the sky (it stands on a slight eminence above the road) have hurried on, vaguely fearful of looking back over their shoulders.

Here is the story of that deserted house:

CHAPTER I

SEVERAL years ago, when white paint still covered the board walls and the shingles on the roof were intact, two women lived there together.

One of them, the elder of the two, was about forty years old, rather stout and short, with black hair and a round, pinkish face. She had pudgy hands, and she tried to keep them white, whenever she hoed in the vegetable garden, by wearing canvas gloves. During the day she wore a khaki skirt with a blue flannel shirt above it and a red necktie; and looked far more like a city woman out camping than the owner of a ranch. She walked with a hurried waddle, swaying from side to side; and spent as much of her time as possible lying on the red sofa in the ranch "parlour," smoking cigarettes and reading the cheap magazines that came to her from San Francisco. Her given name was Polly; her surname no one knew; for she admitted that she only called herself "Polly Brown" in order that no one might know who she really was.

Her companion, everyone in the village of P—— and in the hills roundabout had known for years. Sallie Jackson, the only daughter of old Abe Jackson, who lived in a shanty on the edge of town, was a tall girl of eighteen or nineteen, with straw-coloured hair, a broad, freckled, stupid face in which a large mouth opened, and long arms that dangled heavily at her sides when she moved about. She wore (save in the evening) a soiled gingham dress, long shoes that leaned over on worn heels; and she did almost all the work there was to be done around the ranch-house. Every morning she got up early, sitting for a moment in her bed, yawning and stretching; prepared breakfast, clumping around the kitchen in her heavy shoes; and when coffee in thick white cups was steaming on the table she would stand loosely in the doorway with one big hand on the wall, and shout in her deep, drawling voice:

"Come on, Polly, git yore breakfast. It's all ready."

And Polly, with an inevitable, surprised "Oh!" would patter about her room, drawing on a purple wrapper and adjusting her hair, open the door quickly, and bustle into the kitchen, her black little eyes intent, her hands with rings on them patting away at her plump cheeks, as if every day she felt that they needed to be remodelled.

There was little conversation during the meal: Polly's movements were always nervous, her voice petulant; her round eyes blinked at Sally over the ponderous coffee cup; the purple wrapper sleeve kept falling away from her fat arm; and all she ever said was "Oh, ain't it cold!" or "I got a headache this morning," or (this last with a sudden questioning pause and fixing of her polished eyes), "Do you feel all right this morning, dearie?"

"Yaaaas," Sallie answered to almost all of her companion's remarks.

She always finished eating long before Polly, and sat with her elbows on the brown oilcloth, her chin resting in her hands, bits of hair tumbling over her wide face. After moments of silence, during which she breathed heavily and shifted her feet under the table, she would say:

"Gotta split wood this morning"; or "Gotta hoe them beans to-day"; or "Gotta go to town this afternoon."

As if she did not altogether pay attention, Polly would look up, chewing on a piece of bacon, and say:

"Do you, Sally? Oh, dear!"

And the girl, with no change in her dull eyes or in her position, usually answered:

"Sure I do."

In this way the day began.

If anything really had to be done during the morning, it was Sally who did it; but even before she was dressed Polly loved to trot around in her old purple wrapper, dabbing here and there with a rag that she held bunched up in her hand. She called it "doing the housework."

While she hurried about, keeping the

wrapper together with one arm, her round cheeks would grow pinker, her breath would come more and more rapidly, her eyes would fix themselves almost desperately, and she would dart from one corner to another in the dingy rooms, from a chair to a table, and back again to a chair.

"There," she kept saying, "there, there!"

Then, standing in the middle of the kitchen and glancing about, with a rapid gesture she would toss the rag into a corner and, vanishing into her own room, spend the morning there, doing as little as possible.

Save for the cooking, which was never elaborate, and whatever cleaning was necessary, there was little work even for Sally; for the revenues of the ranch did not come from agriculture. Nevertheless, she would walk around throughout the day, moving heavily in her soiled gingham; and people who went by in automobiles would see her tall figure above them on the slope, and notice the mass of her yellow hair in the sunshine.

It was in the evening that the real life of the two women began. After supper, when they had cleared away the dishes, they went to their rooms, and emerged soon after dressed in robes of satin. Polly always wore red, thinking the effect striking with her black hair; Sally, light blue; and they would arrange themselves in the "parlour," Polly on the sofa with a cigarette and a cheap magazine, Sally across the room in an armchair, her head leaning back, eyes half closed.

Usually they did not have long to wait, for the house was known to ranchers and farmhands for miles around.

Men would arrive in wagons, carts, automobiles; sometimes seven or eight were gathered there on the same evening; and for hours the house would blaze with light and almost burst with sound, a roaring, flaming oven of sordid revelry isolated in the black stillness of surrounding mountains. Before going away, the men always helped the women "clean up the mess"—it was a custom; and there would be a thumping of chairs, and ringing and crashing of glass as they tossed empty bottles on to the pile behind the house. Then they would drive away as they had come, though not silently: lights would finally vanish from the windows; male voices shouting "Oh, Polly!—Oh, Sally!" would diminish; and the heavy darkness of the vast mountain night, full of perfumes and vague, half-heard sounds, would overwhelm the house, like water extinguishing a torch.

CHAPTER II

Of all this crowd, the visitors that came with the greatest regularity to see the women were two men who lived on the next ranch, a few miles down the canyon.

Among the people of the valley and the villagers of P—— Corbin, the rancher, was known for his silence, his unsociability, and his physical strength. He was a tall, heavy-set blond, with a smooth-shaven face, blue eyes, and square chin. At home, while working, he usually wore a pair of blue overalls that came up to his chest, and under them a lighter blue hickory shirt with the collar open. But when he drove to town in the light wagon with Louis, hired-man and dependent, beside him on the seat, he always put on a black necktie and a grey coat that hung loosely from his wide shoulders.

If people spoke to him in the village, standing beside the wagon and looking up at him, he only answered in monosyllables, keeping his face calm and cold, with the trace of a sneer about his mouth; and frequently, while they were still talking, he would turn aside impatiently, cluck to his horse, and drive away, leaving them in a cloud of dust, surprised and angry. As a result, most people disliked him, save McCray, the fat hotel proprietor, who thought him a fine man; but they feared him even more; for they recognized his great

strength, and knew stories of what he had done with it.

As for Louis, no one even noticed him. In his black coat and frayed shirt, he would sit in the cart beside Corbin, leaning forward with his arms on his knees. He was cross-eyed, had thick black hair that drooped over his receding forehead, a flat nose, and a crooked mouth. While people around him spoke, he paid no attention: he only gazed at the horse's tail, turning quickly if the man beside him gave an order. In P—— they called him Corbin's dog.

Louis was no longer a young man. He had spent his boyhood down south of San Francisco along the muddy shore of the bay, or working on small farms. Then for years he had wandered, tramping from one end of the State to the other, and finally, having drifted one day to P——, he met Corbin, who was looking for a man, went with him to the ranch and remained. After the first year or two, he received no regular wages: he merely lived there, working when Corbin told him to, drinking whenever he could get whisky, too lethargic even to think of moving on, resentful, dumb, yet looking upon Corbin as a god.

When Polly's uncle, Old Larned, died, until Polly came from San Francisco to claim her property, it was Corbin who had taken charge of the bay mare. Then he advised Polly how to sell the ranch. When she announced that she would live there, and would never return to the old life in the city, he had shrugged his shoulders incredulously, not knowing what the "old life" had been.

At first Polly's existence went smoothly enough, with Corbin from time to time giving advice. Then she grew lonely, and having met Sally Jackson in the village, took a liking to the awkward girl, and brought her out to the ranch. Now Sally Jackson was known to all the village; at sixteen she had been the target of gossips; and the result of the alliance was that, instead of abandoning the old life in San Francisco Polly, succumbing by degrees, brought it with her to the ranch in the mountains.

"It's no good living all alone," she told Sally. "Don't you think it's nice to have the fellows come around to see us now and then, dearie?"

Sally, who happened to be clattering about the kitchen stove, answered: "Yaaaas," without turning her head. And as the news of this new hospitality crept through the hills little by little, spoken of in bar-rooms, conveyed to lonely mountaineers by Buddy West, the red-haired boy who drove a Ford from ranch to ranch carrying anything for anybody, fresh wind of incentive arose among the men who sawed wood, ploughed up the dry hillsides, and lopped off branches under the sun, and even Louis looked up at Corbin with a new gleam in his eye.

CHAPTER III

It was Sally Jackson that from the very first attracted Corbin's attention.

He thought little of her in the daytime (before Polly's entertainments began): she was ungainly, with a deep voice; but when he entered the parlour one evening and saw her in the light blue satin gown that hung loosely about her, with coils of straw-coloured hair wound thickly around her head, he stopped suddenly in the doorway, throwing back his shoulders with a jerk.

She was sitting on a stiff chair, one arm hanging loosely over the back, looking at him sleepily. He was amazed at the slim whiteness of her arms above the elbows. As he stood there Polly's voice became a meaningless twitter in his ears; he stepped forward, reaching out his arms, took the girl by the shoulders, and lifted her from the chair.

From that day on, it was understood that Sally Jackson was Corbin's girl.

The popularity of the two women grew less, of course, as the novelty of their gaudy parties wore off, and soon

there were many evenings when only Corbin and Louis were there.

This was what Corbin liked. He would sit near Sally on a straight chair, leaning forward, and gripping her wrists in his big hands; and for an hour or more he would talk to her rapidly in a low voice, rarely smiling, pulling her arm towards him now and then. She would reply at intervals: "Oh, say!" or "Oh, go on, now!" or "No?"

But most of the time she sat there motionless, her mouth open in a half grin, laughing gruffly and occasionally pulling her arms back to her lap. Then without any warning Corbin would stand up, take the girl by the arm, and lift her from the chair. She always walked before him obediently; but many times she turned her head and glanced down at her arm, where his red hand encircled the flesh.

"My, ain't he strong!" Polly once exclaimed to Louis. They were sitting together on the red sofa, Polly reclining at one end with a cigarette in her hand. The tobacco smoke climbed up by her round face and formed in layers across the room.

"My!" she repeated. "Ain't he strong! But he shouldn't hurt her arm like that."

"Sure he's strong," Louis answered, without looking at her. "Sure."

He was leaning forward with his arms crossed on his knees, blinking at the stove across the room. Now and then he extended a grimy hand with black, shattered nails and stroked Polly's arm. She regarded him through the smoke, and when he grinned or guffawed hoarsely smiled rapidly: Louis always donned a guilty air as if he were stealing his happy moments.

"Sure," he said again a few minutes later, "there ain't no one stronger. I seen him twist a steer's neck and throw him down—sure—at a rodeo. There was a feller in town says, 'What're you doin' here?' Corbin says, 'I'll show you what,' yeah—he said that. And he hit him right in the jaw—sure—broke him all up—sure he did."

Louis spoke slowly, as if he were pressing out these memories with difficulty from a frozen, darkened mass; he hardly changed expression; and his voice continued in a guttural monotone. In the middle of a sentence he stopped, and nothing more came, though Polly waited. She said:

"My goodness," tossing her cigarette away, and then went on: "But he's an awful good man, just the same, ain't he? Ain't he, dearie? Don't you think he's an awful good man? I do." Her voice trailed away nasally; then she continued: "There ain't many men like him in San Francisco."

Louis said: "I seen him kick a dog and kill it."

"Oh, dearie!" Polly exclaimed.

But Louis said no more.

In his sluggish mind, the name of the city created heavy movements, and he remembered slowly that he had been there years ago—long before the fire.

"I was in 'Frisco," he said, staring vaguely before him. Then he raised his head. "They say the city's been all built up with steel buildings, eh? That must be pretty nice, eh? All steel. That must look fine, don't it? Now don't it?"

"Sure, dearie, sure," answered Polly absent-mindedly.

Louis melted away into a rumbling chuckle. . . .

CHAPTER IV

"You git that tree out to-day, Louis, eh?" Corbin said one morning not long after.

They were at breakfast in the kitchen, eating beans and drinking coffee in which lumps of bread floated. When he spoke he did not raise his eyes from the table.

Louis nodded; but Corbin, not seeing him, went on:

"You git that tree out, Louis. What? Why the hell don't you answer?"

"I heard—yuh."

"Well, then, answer, damn it!"

He had the tree down by noon with the branches lopped away, and in the

afternoon he commenced to saw it into the proper lengths. The road to P—— ran only a few yards from where he was working: occasionally a cart or an automobile went by, leaving a swelling, scattering cloud of yellow dust that remained sluggishly long after the vehicle had disappeared. Every few minutes Louis straightened up, wiping the perspiration from his face with his shirt sleeve; and once or twice he sat down on the log, rolled a cigarette with brown paper and Durham, and gazed about him.

It was midsummer. There was no wind, and in the dense, shimmering air the trees and bushes were like clumps of seaweed on the bottom of a stagnant ocean. Above him, against the thick blue sky, buzzards made even circles, tilting from side to side, rising, falling, wheeling, vanishing over the hills and reappearing, with occasional quiet movements of their wings.

To Louis, who watched them sleepily, they were merely "them birds"—black things always there, flying about for no apparent reason.

He stood up limply, holding the saw in one hand, and prepared for work. Then, hearing the sound of approaching wheels and languorous thumping of hoofs, he glanced up: it was Polly in her buggy, driving toward town. Erect in the seat, her face pink, both hands before her holding the reins, she was looking straight ahead down the road. When Louis called (or grunted), she turned her head quickly, saw him, drew up the cadaverous bay mare and waited for him to come to the fence.

"Hullo, Louis."

"Hullo, Polly."

She was dressed in the faded tan suit brought with her from San Francisco; a round hat of the same colour almost concealed her hair.

"My! Ain't it hot, Louis!"

"Yeaah."

"You mustn't work too hard."

"Noooh," Louis laughed gruffly, twisting his mouth, glancing quickly from side to side.

He had left the saw behind him near the log and he stood by the fence, his hands (one of them gripped his hat) handing loosely down beside his formless trousers. His black hair drooped over his forehead and ears, shining in the sun.

"Well, Louis, good-bye. Take care o' yourself. I gotta go to town."

He watched the buggy move away. On either side of it buckeye was in blossom; among the greens of the foliage ran slender reddish branches of manzanita and madrone; in the clearing opposite, dark green live-oaks stood, bulbous and manifold, in the golden grass; over everything the heat lay in the thick air; and dust rose and drifted slowly along, as the buggy wheels ran with a whispering rattle over the road.

While he was adjusting the saw he heard Corbin's voice and looking up saw him near the house, waving.

"Louis! Louis! Come here! Com'ere, Louis!"

He left his work and walked up the path through the beanfield, carrying the saw. He hated the man who stood there waiting, strong and tall, with the inevitable blue shirt and calm, shaven face. But he obeyed, muttering under his breath.

CHAPTER V

VERY often during that summer, when Corbin ordered him to do something, he grumbled in this way, and two or three times even turned aside. But he always did what he was told to do. One afternoon, nevertheless, Corbin took him by the collar and swung him about.

"Say, what's the matter with you, Louis, huh? You got anything against me? If you have, spit it out. Well?"

"Naw, naw. That's all right. Lemme go."

"Don't I always treat you square? Huh?"

"Sure, sure, that's all right. Lemme go."

"Well, then, you want to keep your face shut, see?"

He shook him once more, then re-

leased him and walked away toward the house. Louis stood there, limp and terrified, his shirt collar still bunched up, his eyes on the ground; then he turned and slouched over to the woodpile.

In this way the days passed, and Louis found them agreeable in spite of Corbin. Once or twice a week they walked up the road to see Polly and Sally; usually they were the only visitors; and in the stuffy parlour they amused themselves until after midnight, and then returned home, half drunk. Louis began to wait for these visits, and while he was working had dim visions of Polly in his mind. She was "all right," he thought; she "never got mad." Only once had he seen the woman lose her temper.

They had all been drinking steadily that evening since the arrival of the two men; a number of beer bottles rolled on to the dusty carpet; then Polly brought out whisky, and they emptied the first quart. Earlier than usual Corbin had favoured Sally with his elephantine caresses.

"My, ain't he forceful!" Polly exclaimed.

She was sitting at one end of the sofa, her legs crossed, smoking a cigarette. Now and then she pushed aside Louis, who, very drunk, kept tumbling limply on to her shoulder.

"Ooh, don't, dearie, don't," she repeated.

The room seemed warm to Louis. Her voice was a far-away, insignificant babble that he scarcely heard; he knew dimly that she didn't want him to lean upon her; but he rolled over again and again, chuckling deeply.

"Now, Louis, stop! That ain't nice!"

Suddenly the door opened and Sally ran into the room, her face flushed.

"He slapped me," she cried. "He slapped me hard! He ain't agoin' to do that!"

Polly bobbed from the sofa.

"What's the matter, dearie? Now, Sally!"

Tugging at her gown, the girl crossed the room heavily, murmuring in her deep voice:

"Wha'd he want to hit me for?"

Just then Corbin entered, his hair disarranged.

"Come on," he said, and he took Sally by the wrists. "Don't be mad."

"Lemme go! Lemme go!"

Red and waddling, Polly trotted forward, her fists clenched and lifted, seized Corbin's arm and began to pull on it aimlessly.

"You let her go now, you just let her go! That ain't no way to do. You're a mean, nasty man, you are. You can't come here and act that way in my house!"

Then softening her voice:

"Oh, be nice, dearie, be nice. You don't want to do nothing like that. Be nice. Now you leave go my wrist"—raising her voice—"you leave me go now! Oh, stop, stop *stop!* You're hurtin' me."

She tottered backward across the room when Corbin pushed her, and flopped clumsily on to the sofa beside Louis, both her feet leaving the floor, one black slipper dropping off. Then while Corbin advanced to the still grumbling Sally she began to weep, raising both hands to her eyes.

CHAPTER VI

But for the most part the days were smooth and placid as the summer itself. The two men cut wood for their friends, gave them advice, once even made a new door for one of the bedrooms and put it in place, after much planning and fitting.

Louis would carry up vegetables that he knew the women did not have; and one day he carved a doll from a piece of kindling, made hair from thin-cut shavings, painted black eyes, cut a notch for a mouth, inserted a tiny nob for a nose, and presented the thing to Polly, standing hat in hand at the kitchen door. She said:

"Oh, Louis! Ain't that just too sweet!"

And she placed it on the mantelpiece, so that it leaned against the wall. It

remained there, arms slanting out from its sides, unmoved by voices, looking placidly down upon the entertainments.

In return for these favours, the two women mended clothes for the men and sometimes even did their washing. Very often, on her way to town in the buggy, Polly, dressed in her tan suit, would draw up near the fence and wait until Corbin or Louis walked down to her.

"Anything you want in town?" she always asked.

Then she would chat for a while, holding the long whip in her hand (she always wore grey buckskin gauntlets); and finally saying, "Well, so-long," would tickle the horse's flank and depart, leaning back in the seat as the buggy moved forward.

If it were Corbin who had spoken with her, he would turn away and walk slowly through the beanfield. But Louis always waited a moment, his hands on the fence, looking after her. Sitting in the buggy, wearing the tan suit, she seemed to him far away and magnificent—not at all the same Polly who reclined, warm and perfumed, of an evening on the red sofa.

* * * * *

And so the lives of the four continued, quietly, monotonously. Summer advanced in the canyon, turning the hills dryer and browner; September came and the nights grew colder. When the two men left the women and walked homeward down the road, carrying a lantern that threw a yellow glow on the dark trees, Louis shivered and buried his hands in his pockets. They began to talk with Polly and Sally about the coming winter and springtime; Louis spent a week chopping wood and piling it in their woodshed for the rainy season; he even helped them tack oiled canvas over a broken pane of glass in the kitchen; and one afternoon he cleaned out the pipe leading from the stove in the parlour.

One day was like another; each week like the one preceding. Their lives seemed so well arranged, so firmly established, that none of the four even dreamed that a change was impending.

CHAPTER VII

LATE in October, on a Sunday evening, when the two men had finished eating and were sitting without a word in the kitchen, Corbin said:

"Come on, Louis, let's go and see the girls."

Smoking a flat, moist cigarette of brown paper, Louis was peering at the stove, in which a fire grumbled, his head bent forward. He grunted.

"Well, then, come on," continued Corbin, rising. "Come on, Louis, come on, come on, come on."

Removing the cigarette and spitting against the base of the stove Louis got up and shuffled from the room: he was surprised and rather pleased at the good-natured ring of Corbin's voice.

They walked up the curving road between two dark walls of trees; Louis shivered when the wind rushed upon them; overhead small remote stars glittered coldly. When at last they turned toward Polly's ranch house, and began to ascend the path, Corbin, swinging the lantern, shouted:

"Hello there!—Hellooooooh, there!"

His voice burst out queerly in the night where the only sound was the rushing wind; and Louis, a few steps behind, started, lifting his head.

For a moment their shoes thumped along over the dusty path: then the ranch-house door opened, releasing an expanding rectangle of yellow light.

Corbin shouted again:

"Helloooh—there!"

A thought took shape in Louis's mind, and he muttered:

"He's feelin' good."

Standing on the threshold, throwing a bulbous shadow into the distorted patch of light on the ground, Polly awaited them, one hand on the knob of the open door. When they were only a few feet away Corbin bellowed once more:

"Hellooooh there!"

"Oh! You scared me," Polly squealed, jumping back.

Then she closed the door when the

men had entered, and stood with her back against it, her round eyes surprised and blinking. Striding up and down the room, his hands thrust into the pockets of his trousers, his grey coat hanging loosely about him, Corbin commenced to laugh and then to sing:

"I'll sell my chaps and saddul,
My spurs can go to rust,
For once in a whi-ile there's a bron-
cho
Yours truly cannot bust."

On the word "while" his voice climbed, long-drawn and strained, finally breaking; and the concluding line tumbled from his lips like the falling of a rope that has been cut. He dropped into a chair near Sally, who had been staring at him all this time with her mouth open, took her wrists, and began boisterously to pull her arms toward him and then push them away. The muscles of his shoulders swelled under the coat; between his collar and the thick yellow hair his red neck appeared for an instant when he leaned forward.

"Ain't it nice he's so happy!" exclaimed Polly suddenly through her nose.

Beside her on the sofa, bent forward and rolling a cigarette, Louis nodded quickly and then glanced up under his black hair. He had never seen Corbin so jovial before; he did not know whether to be pleased or afraid.

"Come on, Polly," shouted Corbin, "get a little drink, will yuh?"

When Polly returned, a trifle flushed, hugging a cluster of bottles to her red gown, Corbin, turning in his chair, commanded with a sweep of his arm toward the table:

"Put 'em down there and git some glasses. And now pour it out," he went on after Polly had obeyed.

CHAPTER VIII

THE air in the room grew warmer, and bluish layers of tobacco smoke extended from above the sofa to the lamp on the mantelpiece. Whenever anyone moved around, the smoke twisted, coiled into knots, drifted a few feet, then settled quietly into place.

It seemed to Louis, who lolled on the sofa with a glass of whisky in his hand, as if he never would have to change his position. There was a pleasant blur in the room about him; through the smoke he could see on the mantelpiece the doll he had carved, leaning stiffly with slanting arms; he could even stare at the greyish walls and connect the dangling tags of loosened wallpaper together in patterns. From across the room came the prolonged mutter of Corbin's voice; beside him he could hear Polly's regular breathing. He said: "Polly! Polly!" and laughed deeply. But when Polly's voice, far away, answered: "What, dearie?" he had forgotten what he wanted to say, and laughing again, took a drink, clutching the glass tightly in his blackened hand.

Once he heard Polly say:

"Now you stop, now you stop! Don't you see that hurts her?" And he felt that she moved suddenly on the sofa.

But little by little the sense of passing time abandoned him; and he barely noticed that Corbin and Sally had gone from the room. He only felt, without realizing why, that a heavy silence had fallen after the slamming of the door.

Stretching out an arm and bending forward, he began to pour whisky into his empty glass, spilling a few drops on Polly's gown. She was humming in a minute high voice, leaning back against the wall; but when she felt the liquor soaking through, she started up, exclaiming:

"Louis! Now you be careful!"

He chuckled, raising the glass; silence settled again over them; and soon Polly, very faintly, began once more to hum. Louis surrendered himself to his glass, dim and contented.

Suddenly he felt Polly jerk away from beside him, vaguely saw her trot across the room, a blur of red and

white, heard her voice loud and nasal crying something at the closed door.

As if he were in another world, he became aware of confusion around him in the house: another voice, deeper and more prolonged than Polly's, hung interminably in the air; lying back on the sofa, his head against the wall, he could see the flutter of Polly's white hands against the door.

Two or three times, without knowing why, he attempted to stand; but he always sank back; and at last, grumbling deeply, he hurled his empty glass at the mantelpiece, raising his voice in a guttural shout.

The door opened; Corbin emerged, his shirt torn, his yellow hair mussed.

Louis saw him all in a blur stride across the room and back, upsetting the table with one hand as he passed. Polly waddled after him, squealing and drumming with her fists against his back. He heard two voices interweaving—one shrill, the other gruff.

"What you done to her? What you done?"

"Lemme go, lemme go!"

"But what'll we do? What'll we do? Oh, you're a bad man, a nasty man! Oh, what'll we do? *What'll we do?*"

He grew dizzy in the whirl of noise, colour, movement. Lying back against the wall, he heard the two voices continue, a tangle of sound: figures moved up and down before him. Then silence came; and all at once he heard a low, choking wail. Looking out through half-closed lids, he saw Polly sitting near the upset table, her head thrown back with hair dangling, her fat arms bare to the elbows waving in the air. She began to moan:

"Oh, what'll we do? Oh, what'll we do?"

The air felt warm again and he smelt the fumes of tobacco. He wanted to sleep. Letting his head roll back be began to breathe profoundly; but another blare of sound awoke him. It was Polly's voice, high-pitched, endless.

Under the lamp that stood on the mantelpiece, spreading a yellow glow about the room, he saw Corbin sitting, his red hands gripping the arms of the chair. For an instant he saw his face clearly—mouth drooping open, eyes wide. Never, never had he seen that expression before: he felt a sluggish burst of surprise; then confusion overwhelmed him; and he was conscious only of colour, light, heat, and through it all, turning, twisting, snarling, like a flashing white wire, the vague shrill monotone of Polly's complaint.

He never did learn all that took place near him that evening. Once, hearing the thud of footsteps, he opened his eyes and half lifted his head. Corbin was walking backward toward the door, turning his head now and then; Polly, facing him and several paces away, followed slowly, her mouth open, sniffling and wrinkling up her nose. Something long and white seemed to connect them.

Once again (this time when he sat up, rubbing his hands over his throbbing head) he saw them. Near the overturned table, Polly was leaning over a chair, working at something with her hands; and he noticed without surprise that now she had on her tan suit, and that the round hat of the same colour covered her hair. Then Corbin came to the door, strode in, said in a vague, far away voice: "It's all ready. It's all ready."

And after that he found himself all alone in the room. The table was still overturned; the fire no longer whispered in the round stove. He sat up straight, resting both hands palm down beside him, and began to laugh without reason.

"Polly! Polly!" he muttered; and when no answer came, he chuckled again foolishly, and let himself tumble back.

The stovepipe, running up the opposite wall, swayed to and fro; against the wallpaper the gilt rim that encircled the pipe shimmered like a round puddle of molten gold.

"Polly," he said again.

Then he heard Corbin outside crying: "All right, all right, all right!" and in the following blur of stillness, a scraping rattle ran along for a few moments and then died away.

When next he came to himself, Corbin had him by the collar and was pulling him away from the sofa.

"Come on, Louis, we got to get out of here."

"Aw right! Aw right!"

"Hurry up, will you! Come on, now, get hold o' yourself."

He was aware of the night, black and chill; a winding road creased with ruts; Corbin's hand compressing his arm; then warmth again.

The day ended.

CHAPTER IX

It was still dark when Louis awoke on the following morning; but through the half-open door he could hear in the kitchen heavy irregular footsteps, the clatter of a chair lifted and set down, the drumming crackle of a new fire in the stove.

Entering his room, a yellowish glow of light lay upon the floor. For years he had been the first to arise: now what was the matter? What was Corbin doing in there? Enveloping his neck in the greasy red comforter, he lay on his side with eyes open, and speculated slowly, groping in the fog of his mind. At first, for several minutes, he felt only a cloudy nausea, and indefinite headache, that overcame the noise he had heard; then gradually his sensations crystallized; and he knew vaguely that he was fully clothed, with a blanket twisted into a bulb around his heavy boots.

The memories of the preceding evening did not come to him all at once. They were there like figures in a forest, illuminated by sudden vanishing lights; and unable to seize them he lay with his mouth open, loth to move, as if an immense, irresistible pressure were descending upon him. Finally, swinging his legs over the edge of the bed, and kicking away the blankets, he stood on the floor, clapping a hand to the wall for support.

"Get some more wood," said Corbin sharply, when Louis came through the doorway, his head hanging; and as the arm-load of kindling tumbled into the wood-box, he looked away from the stove over which he was standing, and ordered:

"Sit down."

Dropping into his chair and resting both arms on the table, Louis followed with his eyes the slender crack that meandered over a grey china plate. The sounds of the fire, of clattering iron, of footsteps were muffled, indistinct. Little by little the lost events returned, slipping into place one after another like the coloured bits of a puzzle. Suddenly he trembled all over and raised his head.

"Did you—kill her?"

The tumult ceased around the stove; Corbin turned his heavy face and regarded Louis, holding a spoon poised over a steaming pan.

"Huh?"

"Did you—did you kill her?"

For a moment the flames seemed angrily to hammer at the stove, rumbling and coughing. Then Corbin, with a sudden half-grin, nodded his head like a mischievous boy.

"Uh-huh."

A shadowy, dumb terror invaded Louis like black liquid. He only mumbled.

"What?" demanded Corbin.

"Nothin', nothin', nothin'."

Gnarled and sombre, like a figure carved from bark, Louis sat there, his hands gripping his knees, his head turning from side to side. Under his black hair, his yellowish eyes moving in his face glinted in the light that the solitary lamp hanging from the ceiling spread about the room. Without speaking, he swayed to and fro; then lifting a hand, pawed at the table, upsetting one of the thick white cups. It rolled clumsily along, tracing a semi-circle, balanced on the rim of the oil-cloth, clattered on to the floor, and lay there, the handle broken. Corbin started.

"What the hell?"

Louis, seeming to shrink, uttered a rumbling laugh.

"What're you going to do?" he said at last.

"Nothin'!" Then almost savagely: "Nothin's goin' to happen. Polly, she's gone away."

That was all he said.

In silence the two men sat down opposite one another, ate beans, and drank their coffee.

Slowly, the window panes turned grey, the cocks began to crow, some near, others replying far away down the valley; and finally, when the trees outside were visible against the sky, Corbin arose, took down the lamp and blew out the flame. In the fat glass body, the white wick, like a pallid worm, moved in the oil.

Then they left the kitchen and began the day's work, Corbin walking toward the barn, Louis taking up a hoe. For a moment he stood by the kitchen door; his clothes, hanging loosely about him, were distorted and creased after the night, his greasy hair covered his ears, his head inclined forward. When Corbin disappeared in the barn, Louis turned away with his hoe on his shoulder, and walked toward the field of horse beans that sloped away toward the road.

All through the morning, while he worked in the crumbling, dry furrows, he would pause and stand leaning on the hoe, mopping the sweat from his forehead. The dust would settle around his ragged shoes; his shadow, more and more contracted as the morning advanced, would lie motionless, curving over the piles of earth; his head would sink lower; and with eyes half-closed he would look toward the house. Now and then he would see Corbin, bulky in a light blue shirt, the sun shining on his yellow hair.

Into Louis' mind memories arose, as bits of mud and decayed roots emerge in the stirring of a dark pool. Events long forgotten of his vagabond days ascended: small town jails, riots, police clubs. When he climbed the hill at noon (Corbin, standing before the house, had bellowed his name), he was silent and moody; he ate his food without a word; and not until after he had finished, and was leaning forward to roll a cigarette, did he say, glancing obliquely at Corbin:

"Maybe they'll come."

"Who'll come?"

Louis jerked his arm sideways.

"The cops."

Leaning back in his chair and thrusting both hands into his pockets, Corbin regarded Louis with an expressionless face; then widening his mouth and shaking his head gravely, he said:

"Aw hell!"

Louis giggled, spilling tobacco from the paper that he was moistening; and when Corbin arose and walked from the kitchen, slamming the door behind him, Louis remained in his chair, stooping forward, the flattened, brown cigarette emerging from under his moustache, his jaw advanced, his eyes on the dirty wall, opposite. Once or twice, he grinned slowly, moving his shoulders.

There was a tree near the road already felled, from which he had to lop away the branches. He walked down the hill soon, carrying the axe. It was a hot, autumn afternoon with dry sweet odours in the air, and an opaque, blue sky, near and oppressive, enclosing the world. Occasionally during his work, Louis would pause, leaning on his axe, and peer up and down the road. Once, when a farm wagon rattled toward him behind two heavily trotting horses, he stepped behind a clump of bushes and stood pressing his shoulder to a tree. But the pounding of hoofs and the tapping and jingle of harness diminished, and the haze of dust drifted away over the foliage.

The clear afternoon flowed onward in silence. Whenever a wagon or cart went by on the road, moving rapidly against the motionless, dusty greens, Louis felt a rapid terror that made him glance from side to side. It was undefined, without object, this fear of his, a vague effusion of sentiment, as if a sullen, dank pool within him evapo-

rated to the sun. And as he worked, he would look around now and then, wiping the sweat from his brow, suddenly afraid.

About three o'clock an automobile drew up beside the fence, and a fat man in a light coloured overcoat leaned out, waving his hand.

"Hey! Come here, please, just a minute, will you?"

Louis raised his eyes; he felt as if the air, concentrating about him, were compressing his head and body. Wiping the dust from his round, smooth-shaven face, the man continued in a faint voice:

"Come here, please. Just come here a minute."

Dropping the hoe and stiffening all over, Louis glanced behind toward the house. It stood there lonely in the heat, grey against the yellow hillside: Corbin was not visible.

"Oh, come here, please, just a minute."

As if led by a string, Louis walked toward the fence, arms swinging before him, head drooping; and resting his thick hands on the wire, he waited, the dust thrown up by his shuffling feet descending around his shoes.

"Can you tell me, please, where this road goes to? I really did not know it was so far. It's terribly hot, isn't it? And is the grade very steep beyond here?"

Louis said: "Huh?" and the fat man repeated the question, his voice high-pitched, eyes round, his small dust-coated mouth framing the words carefully.

Louis told him where the road went to, adding: "Naw, it ain't far. Keep goin'."

When the automobile departed with a rasping of gears, Louis waited in the dust, astonished; and then still uncertain returned to the log.

An hour or two later, in the clear metallic evening light, when the deep colour had faded from the sky, and the heat was gone, he walked toward the ranch-house. Near the kitchen door he found Corbin, solid in his blue shirt, gazing toward the road, one hand shading his eyes; and turning to look in the same direction, he saw on their own lane an automobile truck ascending the hill . . .

"They're comin'," he said, glancing quickly around him.

"No, no," Corbin growled, "what's the matter with you? Can't you see it's Buddy West?"

The chickens scattered wildly as the Ford approached; and the two dogs ran barking from their kennels. As soon as the car stopped, Buddy West lifted his thin legs from under the wheel, vaulted to the ground, his bushy red hair uncovered, and ran toward them, waving his hat and grinning.

"Say, what do you think?" he began, his eyes shining in his freckled face, "What do you think? Them two women have gone away. Yeah. Polly and Sally. Yes they have. They left a note say'n they wuz gone to the city. What do you know about that, huh? I guess that's some news. Oh, wait till I break it to 'em in town." He slapped his thigh. "I went up there with a sack of potatoes, yeah, and I found the note pinned on to the door, an' the door open. Why, they left everything right in the house. Now that's queer, I'll say."

Silently, Louis stared at the ground. Corbin shrugged his shoulders, and drew down the corners of his mouth.

"Damn funny," he said.

CHAPTER X

DURING the night, Louis awoke and lay on his back, blinking into the darkness, the comforter squeezing his shoulders. In the other room he could hear snoring, rhythmic and monotonous; and the wind occasionally passed over the farm like a whisper.

Far away down the valley an auto horn moaned, like some strange bird of the night; and Louis, trembling, unable for a moment to move, stared through the window at the bluish black sky alive with the cold vibration of

stars. Until dawn a corrosive fear made him start at every sound and roll from side to side. At breakfast Corbin said:

"We're goin' to town to-day."

"To town! Aw no, what d'ya want to go to town for? We don't want nothin' in town. Don't go to town."

But a few hours later, side by side in the light wagon, they rattled down the lane through the beanfield. Leaning forward, his jaw protruding, a moist cigarette hanging under his moustache, Louis frowned at the swaying back of the horse. Corbin seemed very gay. Sitting there with the reins in his hands, he kept talking about what he was going to buy in town, and spitting tobacco juice out over the bounding wheel. When they passed through the gate, he saw the log at which Louis had been working the day before.

"Say, is that all you've got done?" he exclaimed, his eyes twinkling; and he nudged Louis suddenly, shifting in his seat. "I'll just come down and show you how to-morrow, eh? You're a lazy dog, huh, Louis?" And he burst out laughing.

With dust rising above the wheels, they drove along the road between two masses of green, the yellow hillsides climbing away on their right, the hot blue sky bending over them. Corbin's grey coat hung loosely from his shoulders; his hat brim drooped over his eyes; yellow hair descended on to his red neck; and to Louis, peering up at him now and then, he seemed a mountainous, calm figure, awful with steady blue eyes. Swarthy men and gnarled women with dangling arms and frowsy hair waved to them from cabin doorways. Once, when he saw a wagon standing by the roadside, Louis wanted to jump to the ground and hide himself in the bushes; but he only twitched, turning in his seat, and uttered a whine that made Corbin look down and say: "Huh?"

Until they reached the edge of town fear kept leaping up within him like sudden spurts of boiling water in a kettle.

When they entered the village and came to a halt under the cottonwood at the cross-roads, they saw McCray, voluminous and red, in a rocking chair on his hotel verandah, a greyish rag encircling his neck. He stirred uneasily when they came toward him, lifted a vast hand, and said in his wheezing voice:

"Well, well, Corbin! Well, well, Corbin!"

Corbin dragged a green rocking chair across the porch and sat down; Louis planted himself gingerly in a straight back chair, and stared silently before him.

"Them girls have gone away," began McCray huskily. "Did they tell you where they wuz goin'?"

"No, no, they didn't tell me a thing about it."

"I'm glad they're gone. I'm glad of it," continued McCray, tapping with his cane on the floor. "I said long ago they wasn't no good to the country. I said: 'Them girls ain't no good here.'"

He breathed heavily for a moment through his nose and compressed his lips so tightly that they formed a straight line across the field of yellow bristles; his minute eyes, isolated behind mounds of reddish flesh, were blinking rapidly. Turning gradually toward Louis, he asked:

"How are *you*, Louis?"

"Oh, aw right, aw right."

Corbin terminated the silence that followed by saying:

"Well, we got a lot of stuff to buy. Come on, come on."

For more than an hour, trembling and silent, Louis accompanied his master. He had never seen Corbin more jovial. In Turner's grocery store, when Petey, Turner's cadaverous younger brother, uttered a conventional joke, he bellowed with laughter, standing there among boxes of fruit and vegetables, pencil and paper in hand; and a few minutes later, emerging from the store, he shouted to Buddy West who was descending from his Ford, and invited him to have a drink.

In the dim mirror behind the bar, Louis could see as through a fog the faces of his two companions, grinning at one another, raising glasses. He stood behind them, drinking slowly, and wished that Corbin would hurry. Buddy West, his teeth gleaming in his freckled face, his copious hair shaken to and fro, was saying:

"This ain't no place for a man like me. Why, I could take the flivver up into the valley an' make three times as much. Sure I could. Why—"

Putting his glass on the bar, Louis walked slowly across the room, looking stupidly at the coloured prints on the wall: there was one of a man in brown, holding a gun on his knee, smiling freshly at a black and white dog; another of a brilliant automobile lavishly coloured, surrounded by long, slender men and women. The voices behind him diminished while Louis contemplated the figures. While he was examining, as if dazed, the picture of a negro in a white cap, holding in his hands a package of breakfast food, he felt a hand on his shoulder and he started, with a sudden bursting moan.

"What's the matter with you? Come on."

All the way home, in the clarity of late afternoon, neither of them spoke. When the horse was in the barn and they were entering the kitchen, Corbin said, laying crumpled paper in the stove:

"You see? There's nothing to it."

CHAPTER XI

THE following day, near the woodpile behind the kitchen, Louis was splitting into kindling the blocks he had sawed that morning. All around him, among the chips on the ground, chickens were strutting, making small meditative sounds, jerking their heads backward and forward; and a short distance away the two dogs lay before the kennel, now and then lifting their muzzles to snap at flies.

Swinging his axe without regularity, Louis worked slowly, setting up a block, splitting it, replacing one of the fragments, dropping the axe upon that. From the other side of the house, where Corbin was making a new chicken coop, came the rhythmic wheezing of a saw. Leaving his axe in a half-severed block, Louis would pause to listen, passing the sleeve of his shirt over his face.

For a few moments, always, the noise of the saw continued; then after a silent interval, the tapping of a hammer would follow, beating time to Corbin's whistle; and after that, the rattling of boards. When the saw recommenced, Louis set to work, urging the axe from the cleft wood, and staring down across the beanfield. There was no wind; against the blue sky, the trees on the ridge did not move; only the buzzards were in motion, tracing their tangled curves. Once or twice along the road, a wagon passed by, half immersed in yellowish dust.

Each one made him think of Polly and of how she went by driving toward town; he imagined her sitting in the buggy, her round face pink, her tan suit powdered with dust. He remembered her voice, and how she always asked if she could buy something for him. And as he returned to his work, her image vanished slowly, growing first smooth and highly coloured, like the prints he had seen the day before, then blending with them, becoming a negro in a white cap, sitting in a polished automobile.

Corbin's hammer tapped monotonously, and the chickens came and went. In the placid afternoon that enclosed him like a stagnant pool of heat and colour, Louis felt drowsy; the humming flies were about him in the air; near their kennel the dogs were asleep; and more and more often he stopped working to wipe his face. Once, for several minutes, resting his axe on the ground, he stared toward the grey wall of the house, his head drooping: he could almost see her now, in her red gown on the sofa, the smoke of a cigarette drifting upward across her face. She was

talking, laughing; and under the black hair he could picture her red mouth as it opened and closed; he remembered the way she used to lean forward.

"Hey, Louis, what's the matter?"

Standing near the kitchen door, one foot on the step, Corbin was looking back over his shoulder. Grinning, Louis raised the axe and let it fall on to a block of wood upright before him; and while Corbin moved around inside the house, he worked steadily, like an automaton, chopping, tossing the kindling on to a pile. When Corbin reappeared, saying: "I'm going up the hill to look at that fence," and walked away, Louis stood quietly looking after him.

He wanted, suddenly, to see again the house in which Polly had lived. A tremor of fear, deliciously painful, ran through him; and holding the axe limply, he waited there, dimly surprised. Far away up the trail, against the golden hillside, he could see Corbin's blue shirt, diminishing rapidly; as he watched, it vanished beyond a cluster of live-oaks, reappeared, vanished again, this time into a canyon behind a shoulder of the hill. The axe fell to the ground, and Louis stood there, uncertain: then he turned away and hurried down toward the road.

He barely noticed the ascent, or the sluggish heat resting in the canyon. When he reached the level again, he paused, hesitating a moment; and then walked quickly to a curve in the road from which he might see the empty house. It stood there as usual, greyish white against the blue sky; the windows were closed, with white curtains still in them; but the door was open, and he could see furniture in the parlour. When at last he came to the doorstep, he halted, resting his hand against the warm boards, panting: the door in the kitchen also was open, and he could look straight through the house, and see out behind the heap of bottles lying in the sun. Lowering his head, he crossed the threshold and stood in the parlour.

Vague memories of that last night reappeared in his mind when he saw the table and a chair overturned: voices metallic and plaintive, tobacco smoke, all that whirl of sound and colour in which Polly had moved before him. There against the wall was the red sofa, speckled with cigarette ashes; there was the doorway through which Corbin and Sally had disappeared.

Feeling suddenly weak and out of breath, he crossed the room and sat down in his old place, leaning forward, as he used to do, with his elbows on his knees. The sunlight of the late afternoon entered the window opposite and spread angular yellow patches on the floor; against the dirty pane of glass a sturdy blue fly, buzzing frantically, pattered and thumped. Very gradually, like the slow rising of water in an emptied well, fear took possession of Louis.

He stared across the room, gripping the edge of the sofa, and feeling unable to move. On the shelf above the stove, he saw the doll that he had carved for Polly, leaning stiffly with emerging arms and jumbled hair of shavings. It reminded him so vividly of her that he turned with a grunt toward the end of the sofa where she always reclined. Then, recovering his strength, he arose quickly to his feet. But before he went from the house, he took the wooden doll from its place and concealed it in his shirt; and all the way down the canyon he pressed one hand against his stomach in order that the doll might not be lost.

Corbin had not yet returned when Louis reached the woodpile. When he did come, striding down the hillside, crossing the corral, Louis, watching him, felt a rapid surge of terror; and he could only grin and stammer in answer to Corbin's greeting.

CHAPTER XII

THEY said little to one another that evening at supper.

Leaning forward over his plate, eating stolidly his beans, and drinking

coffee, Louis did not raise his eyes towards Corbin. He felt ill at ease, almost frightened, and whenever Corbin cleared his throat, he cowered back in his chair, afraid of what his companion might say. After they had finished eating, while Corbin unrolled and spread out the newspaper, Louis glanced toward him, peering over the cigarette he was rolling.

He sat there in his blue shirt, motionless as a figure of coloured wax, his blond hair neatly combed, his hands washed. Hanging above him from the ceiling, the pudgy, glass-bodied lamp dropped a yellow glow on to the unfolded newspaper and blended into one smooth, brownish surface that glistened among the dishes the variegated, blurred oilcloth. Inside the black stove, the fire rumbled, showing red through the crevices in the iron. From time to time the paper rattled.

Once, glancing up, Corbin asked:

"Where'd you go when I was up the hill?"

Louis started, and then remained silent and rigid, as if two jets of air, one from either side, had come upon him, compressing him.

"Huh?" grunted Corbin insistently.

"Me?—Nowhere," Louis muttered, rubbing his hands across his knees.

"Well, you didn't do much work when I was gone."

Corbin returned with that to his paper; and Louis, relaxed again, nervously drew forth Durham and brown paper from his pocket, and began to roll a cigarette.

For almost an hour there was silence while Corbin faithfully read the small type of the newspaper. Although what he found there had no connection with his life, and penetrated little farther than his mumbling lips, the perusal gratified him, touching his rather dense self-importance. To Louis it was always an occasion for awe. Evening after evening he had watched the drooping sheet before him, until it had become a symbol of Corbin's superiority. But now he felt uneasy, and hoped that Corbin would continue to read for a long time, fearing what he might say when he had finished.

They sat there in that warm kitchen with only the noises of the stove, the rustle of the newspaper, their own breathing. In the corners of the room, unlighted by the yellow glow of the lamp, heavy shadows were grouped, forming a dark case for the cone of light enveloping the table. Rolling one cigarette after another, Louis stared at Corbin's solid profile: for days he had vaguely feared unknown powers; now, looking at Corbin, he wanted to crouch beside the table, cower, whine, steal away. When Corbin glanced toward him, turning the paper with a great rattling gesture, Louis started, spilling grains of tobacco on the table.

About nine o'clock, Corbin folded the newspaper and tossed it into the woodbox beside the stove; then he yawned, extended his arms, rose to his feet, and left the room without a word. Louis heard the bedroom door slam behind him. For some minutes he remained there beside the table, feeling relieved, like a schoolboy whose teacher has gone away. Finally he, too, arose; and reaching over his head for the lamp, lifted it down, placed it on the oilcloth, glanced around him; then took it again by the glass body, and carried it away to his room, walking along in a wavering pool of light.

CHAPTER XIII

THE rains began.

Every day, while it was still dark, Louis would light the fire in the kitchen stove, shivering in the damp air. Then he would cook breakfast, and when everything was ready, call Corbin.

Morning after morning, they sat opposite one another drinking coffee: long after they had finished, light came, grey, sodden light revealing all around them on the hillsides walls of mist; and the rain, which had been to them only a continued rushing sound, became vis-

ible through the streaming panes. It was always Louis who stepped out into the greasy mud to tend to the horses in the barn, and the cow. Walking patiently, head bowed forward, water streaming down his dark face and hanging on his moustache, he would finish the work and re-enter the house. With his back to the stove, blinking the moisture from his eyes, he would dry his clothes, watching the placid Corbin. And if the rain continued, they would pass the entire day there in the kitchen, rarely speaking, Corbin reading a magazine, Louis smoking innumerable cigarettes.

One afternoon, after a soaking day, Corbin remarked:

"It's too bad we can't go see the girls."

Louis grunted and then trembled. Crouching on a chair, his feet twisted around the legs, he looked over at Corbin, who had resumed his reading: the light from the hanging lamp fell on to his yellow hair and broad back; one thick hand rested on his knees, the other held the newspaper. And fear returned to Louis, not fear of the cops, but fear of Corbin.

During the latter part of November, after almost a week of rain, portions of the road between the ranch and P—— were washed out, and for several days Buddy West could not bring the newspaper.

With nothing to occupy his mind in the evening, Corbin grew restless, and walked up and down the kitchen floor, kicking at bits of kindling that lay near the stove. Outside, the rain fell steadily. Now and then, putting his hands in his pockets, he would stand before the window, stare at the black, dripping grass! yawn, and then turn away with a twist of his shoulders, and begin his marching again. Louis always sat patiently beside the table, rolling one cigarette after another.

"He's scared! He's scared!" he sometimes thought.

But Corbin always made some commonplace remark in a bored and undisturbed voice, such as:

"This must a' raised hell with the road!" or "Say, don't it come down!"

And Louis could not help knowing that Corbin was not thinking of Sally at all.

"He ain't scared o' nothin'," he often thought.

And he would tremble. On these cold, wet nights memories of that evening returned, filling Louis' mind and almost obliterating the sound of the rain. Little by little he had been able to fill in details that had lost themselves at first in the blur of his drunkenness. He understood now what the noises had meant, coming from the next room; he remembered Polly in her red gown, paddling at the door with her white hands; he could hear once more her voice. He constructed whole pictures of what had happened, allowed them to take shape in his mind, and remain there, like the shining steel buildings of the city. When he thought of consequences, of what might follow, it was always himself whom the "cops" were leading away; it was himself, not Corbin, waiting in some jail.

Sometimes during those long, stuffy evenings, with the rain drumming on the roof, it was as if this already had happened, as if he really were in jail. Like an acid, fear ate away the foundation of his strength and made him ache. And it was Corbin who had done it all. There he was, sitting opposite him, calm and untroubled as if made of stone. Hour after hour, smoking his cigarette, gazing at him, Louis studied every detail: the reddish face, the creased blue shirt, always soiled around the neck, the loose grey coat over the wrinkled vest. He stared at his hands, resting on the table or on his knees; he thought of the muscles under those dirty sleeves; he examined the heavy neck, short and bulky. Then he would tremble all over.

Once, after such a scrutiny and aching fear, he started from his chair with a slight moan, brushing a tin plate from the table. Corbin glanced up.

"What's the matter? What're you gibbering at?"

His teeth chattering, Louis only grunted.

"What's the matter with you, Louis?" asked Corbin again, rising to his feet.

"I—I thought—maybe—they wuz—comin'."

"Who?"

"The—the—cops." Louis giggled and retired a pace or two.

But Corbin, stepping forward, seized him by the collar and shook him.

"The cops! Say, what's wrong with you? What do you want to think about cops for?"

Feeling the strength of Corbin's arms Louis whimpered.

"Sit down," Corbin said, and pushed him on to the chair.

For a moment he sat there, quivering violently; then he looked up; he felt a great, full loathing for Corbin that rose within him like a breath of wind.

CHAPTER XIV

Some time during the night one of the dogs barked, and Louis awoke, lifting his head from the folded coat that served him for a pillow. Through the window he could see that the rain clouds had disappeared; the stars were shining, cold and glittering in the keen, black air; a chill, windless silence followed each sound of the dog's voice.

"Shep!" he called gruffly, "Shep!"

Against the dark ground he saw something move, heard a thin whining, then stillness overwhelmed the barking. After a moment he let himself fall back on to the coat, and lay there blinking at the ceiling. Once more he heard a rapid, muffled bark. Shivering suddenly and drawing the red comforter around him, he lay there fully awake, undefined and undirected fears stirring in him. Everything seemed mingled in his mind: there was Polly, not fully appearing, but dim, a mere bundle of sensation; Corbin threatening him; then all manner of dangers ready to tumble forward and crush him. Moaning deeply, he turned on his bed.

An hour went by, and still he could not sleep. Outside he no longer heard even the dog.

Lying there, he wondered again what Polly might be doing. In his thoughts he could see her features clearly; he imagined her presence, knew that her gown was red; applied to her memory all the indefinite longings that were in him.

Finally warmth crept over him as he lay enveloped in his red cocoon; he began to feel as if he were once more in her house, reclining on the sofa in the parlour; and a drowsy, agreeable haze came over him gradually. . . .

As if severed by a knife, the vision disappeared; he twitched. Once more fully awake, he lay open-eyed in the darkness. Faintly, coming from across the hall, he could hear snoring; and as he lay there listening resentment bubbled up inside of him like a spring; he sat upright, pushing away the red comforter. In the silence, the snoring rose and fell.

"He ain't scared o' nothin'," he thought.

Rapidly he drew his legs from the bedclothes and stepped on to the floor, shuddering at the chill of the boards. He wanted to see Corbin; he loathed Corbin. With both hands before him, head thrown back, eyes wide, he moved across the room toward the doorway, lifting his feet carefully and planting them as softly as possible. When he stood on the threshold, one dark hand pressed to the wall, he hesitated and began to listen again. As before, the snoring continued, rhythmic, unbroken. He could see nothing in the black hallway; yes, far away, there was a rectangle of sky glittering with stars—the window in Corbin's room. Clinging to the wall, trembling, he waited; and as he heard the snoring, he felt a tiny, brief surge of power. He stepped forward.

The floor cracked as if a plank were ripped from end to end, and he stopped abruptly, gripping the edge of the door, trembling violently. In Corbin's room the snoring ceased, and for an instant there was a crushing empty silence in which Louis dared not even breathe.

Then the sound returned. Shivering, almost collapsing from terror, Louis darted back across the room, tumbled on his bed, wrapped himself in the comforter.

* * * * *

The morning that followed was of a brilliant, razor-like clarity. All over the moist ground and leaves the rain still glistened; there was a fresh odour in the air; the sunlight was hard and golden, filled with a premonition of coming warmth.

As they drank coffee, Corbin remarked:

"We're goin' to town this afternoon."

Louis only grunted, without looking up. Ever since they had first met, an hour before, he had tried to avoid Corbin's glance.

CHAPTER XV

BEFORE they started for town that afternoon Corbin drew a dollar from his pocket and held it out to Louis.

"Here," he said, "money."

And all the way to P—— he talked gaily, nudging his silent companion.

They found McCray sunning himself on the hotel porch, the soiled rag around his neck. After he had greeted them, he said:

"Buddy West, he's back from the city."

"Yes?" answered Corbin. "I didn't know he'd gone."

"Oh, yes, yes. He went up for a few days while it was rainin'."

When Corbin had bought whatever he needed the two men went into the saloon on the corner and stood before the bar, looking into the mirror at the lurid prints on the opposite wall. After a drink or two, Corbin began to talk with a pair of ranchers, and Louis, left to himself, drew the dollar from his pocket and drank alone. He was soon oblivious to the sounds about him; he saw the bar-tender moving; figures in the mirror interwove; but he did not look up until the swinging door slapped and a familiar voice rose above the others. It was Buddy West, in new overalls, his red hair cut closely around his neck.

"Frisco? Well I guess!" he was saying. "Oh, you Frisco! It's some town." He walked to the bar when the others made way for him and, resting his elbow on the wood, turned toward the men, his blue eyes wide open and dancing. "Why you fellows are only half alive if you ain't seen Frisco.—Do?—What didn't I do? Why say, if a man can't have a good time in that city, there's something wrong with him!"

His words in Louis' ears began to blend together and he returned to his whisky. Then he heard Buddy's voice again, emerging clearly:

"Who do you think I saw up there—walkin' along Kearny Street? Old Polly. Yeah!—I swear. I saw her comin' toward me an' I sez, 'Well Polly.' She stopped all of a sudden—she was that surprised—Huh?—Yeah—looked the same as ever. But she was in a hurry. Guess she's pretty busy. I asked her how Sally was an' she didn't seem to know. She didn't say when they'd come back, either."

He stopped speaking and, before he could begin again, Louis' voice droned in the silence:

"Ask Corbin."

When no one spoke, he went on:

"Ask Corbin. Yes, go ahead, ask Corbin."

"Ask Corbin what?" said Buddy.

"Ask him how Sally is. He knows."

For a moment they all looked at Corbin, who leaned against the bar smiling placidly. Then, believing that they saw the joke, they burst out laughing, and Buddy West, slapping his thigh, called out:

"Oh, you Corbin!"

Like surf conversation swept over the occurrence. A few minutes later Corbin said:

"Come on, Louis."

All the way home, made drowsy by the sunlight and the monotonous, scraping rattle of the wheels, Louis dozed,

his head drooping forward; and when the wagon stopped before the ranch-house, he descended limply, stood there swaying while Corbin unharnessed the horse. He did not see clearly again until he had plunged his head into the cold water of the horse-trough.

Corbin awaited him when he entered the kitchen. He was sitting near the stove, his hands in his pockets, his legs extended before him. He said:

"Louis."

"Huh?"

"What'd you say that for?"

Trembling, Louis dropped into a chair and looked dumbly at the floor. Corbin asked again:

"What'd you say that for?"

Louis did not answer. Leaving his chair, Corbin took him by the shoulders, raised him to his feet, shook him so that his black hair moved, and planted him on the floor.

"Why don't you answer, Louis?"

"I don't know."

He felt weak all over, as if a vast weight were upon his head; he wanted to drop to the floor, to creep, to grovel before Corbin. He began to whimper.

Quickly Corbin pushed him into a chair and walked away. When he returned, Louis still sat there huddled together. Corbin drew his own chair near the table and sat down.

"Louis," he began.

There was no answer.

"Louis," he said again, raising his voice.

"Huh?"

"You never want to say a thing like that again, see? Never—say—that—again."

Louis nodded, drew himself upright, and gazed at Corbin's flushed face. He wanted of a sudden to jump up, to cry out. But he turned instead toward the table and said nothing. On the oil-cloth, between two china plates, a long-bladed carving knife was lying. Dreamily Louis regarded it. Then, raising his eyes, he saw that Corbin, too, was looking there.

For a moment the two men sat staring at the knife. Then they glanced at one another, blinked, and quickly looked again toward the table. Neither of them spoke.

CHAPTER XVI

EARLY on the following morning a noise aroused Louis and, through half-closed eyes, he saw Corbin standing in the doorway, holding a candle before him. He lay there without raising his head.

Lifting the candle, stepping cautiously, Corbin moved forward into the room. The light fell upon his red cheeks and wide-open eyes, and Louis noticed on his face the same loose-lipped expression that had been there long ago, in the warmth and blur of the evening in the girls' parlour. Throwing aside the comforter, he sat up in bed.

"Huh?"

The candle wavered.

"It's gettin' late. You'd better get up," muttered Corbin.

Without a word the two men ate their breakfast and parted for the day.

* * * * *

That same evening, when Louis had gone into his bedroom, carrying the lamp, Corbin's door closed and the key turned in the lock. Louis put down the lamp and peered out into the hall. Then, before rolling himself in the blankets and the red comforter, he closed and locked his own door.

Clear days marched by them, one after another, cold in the mornings, swelling to a brilliant heat at noon. And the two men lived there silently, each doing his work, coming together only in the kitchen when they ate their meals. Often, while they sat there, looking up suddenly, Louis would find Corbin's eyes upon him, placid, meditative. He would fall to eating rapidly and would leave the table as soon as possible. But nothing happened.

Then one afternoon, while he was sawing up a log, an idea came to Louis that made him drop the saw and straighten up in the sunlight. Why should he not go away? Standing

there, arms hanging loosely beside him, he stared away down the road, memories and desires entering his mind, as if he were awakening from an age-long vegetable sleep to regain awareness of himself.

And that night at supper he did not lower his eyes before Corbin.

He remembered again his younger days and his wanderings. He felt free once more, thinking of them, as if merely the thought that he might go away when he desired had made Corbin diminish before him. But he did not set the day of his departure. He went on as usual, doing what Corbin told him to do, sawing wood, caring for the horses and the cow; but when Corbin gave him an order in too gruff a voice he stood for a moment sullenly looking up into his face; and Corbin often hesitated and turned away in silence.

Late one afternoon, when the sun was setting, Buddy West in his Ford drove up their lane, waving an arm. Standing behind the kitchen, near the woodpile, they waited for him to come. When the car stopped, he leaped to the ground and ran toward them, bareheaded, joyously unthinking.

"Say, what do you think?" he called, "what do you think? I was in Amesburg this afternoon, and who do you think I saw on the street?" He stopped before them, his face glowing. "I saw Polly! Yes, I did! I could swear it! She didn't see me, an' I couldn't speak to her because she wuz goin' upstairs in a building. But it was Polly, I know."

Louis, eyes on the ground, heard Corbin mutter. Buddy continued:

"Ain't you surprised?" Then quickly: "Maybe you already knew it." He glanced at the two men one after the other.

"Knew it! No!" Corbin said finally. "Well, I'm damned." And he laughed for a long time. Louis only stood there, still looking at the ground.

"I told 'em about it in town an' old McCray says he hopes she won't come back here. Oh, boy! I don't know about that, eh?" He burst into laughter, throwing back his head, opening his mouth, his freckled face creasing.

They waited in silence while he drove away. At last Louis raised his eyes to Corbin's face. It was flushed, unmoving, solid. Then he turned and watched Buddy West's truck slip over the bumps of the lane, enveloped in yellow dust. It passed out through the gate, turned up the road and vanished; and the dust went away gradually in the calm air.

He heard Corbin move and he glanced toward him again. He was standing erect, head thrown back, chest protruding.

"Why, hell!" he exclaimed suddenly. "Nothin's goin' to happen! Nothin' can happen. We're all right! Come on in, Louis." He turned and walked away toward the house.

Louis waited until he had disappeared inside. He felt once more the old terror taking possession of him; he felt again hatred of Corbin; but the familiar, dull weight no longer pressed him to the ground. Slowly he went into the kitchen.

He would go away that very night.

CHAPTER XVII

THROUGH that long evening, while Corbin read the newspaper, Louis sat beside the table in silence, listening to the rumble of the fire in the stove. It was the only sound in the kitchen, save the rustle now and then of Corbin's paper. Outside the wind blew lightly, coming like soft breathing from the west; and once a dog barked rapidly, stridently, then ceased.

Louis was not certain where he would go. Sitting there, bending forward, with cigarette smoke mounting in the air beside his face, he thought again of his days as a tramp, when he had wandered from one end of the State to the other; and into his mind returned the memories dormant for years. As before, they almost made him forget Corbin, who sat there like

the stolid image of a god, yellow-haired, impregnable.

At last Corbin folded his paper, pressed it on to the table with his large hand, yawned, left his chair. Opening the door, he stood for a moment holding the knob, staring at the dim sky; then, saying "Good-night, Louis," he walked away to his room. For another half-hour Louis sat in the kitchen.

Corbin's door was open, when at last he walked down the hall carrying the lamp (after a few nights both men had ceased to turn their keys) and, pausing, Louis could hear him snoring. Putting the lamp on a table in his own room, he closed the door. Then he pulled out a drawer in his shabby bureau, peered dully at the contents, and wondered what to take with him. In the jumble of old rags, knives, sacks, he saw the wooden doll that he had carved for Polly lying half-concealed with only its head and one arm emerging. He removed it, examined the face and the crisp hair, dropped it again. Then he waited, filled with indecision and fear.

He heard a dog moving around outside, and while he stood there listening moonlight entered the room, extending across the floor. Trembling, he approached the window and leaned out. The moon hung like a pallid globe in the luminous blue sky, filling the air with greyish light; the hills lay darkly motionless, and the beanfield stretched away toward the road. Resting his hands on the sill, he climbed through the opening and lowered himself on to the ground. As he moved away, the dogs came and nosed him; but he pushed them aside and hurried on, walking quietly.

All the way down the hill he dared not look back over his shoulder toward the house; hands deep in his pockets, he plodded on, now and then striking the toe of his boot against a stone. When he reached the fence, he hesitated, resting his hands on the boards, and wondered which way to turn.

To his left the road led to the village of P——, where McCray was, and the saloon, and where Buddy West, shaking his red hair, talked and laughed. And in the opposite direction, up the hill, past the empty, grey house, down a long, winding road through a canyon blackened by redwoods, was Amesburg. Polly was there.

Coyotes, while he stood waiting, laughed up and down the scale on the ridge. Somewhere out of the moonlit night came a prolonged Breeeeeeeet, and then a solitary, rapid cry. Louis squeezed the fence.

It really made little difference through which town he went, for he would pass on in the darkness, and when morning came would be far to the northward tramping the roads. But he felt himself drawn in both directions, and he could only wait, sluggishly, until the pull of one was stronger than the pull of the other. The coyotes laughed again, beginning gruffly, their bark flowering into a clear trickle of sound; behind him, one of the ranch dogs replied, sharply. Then the great silence returned under the advancing moon; and he heard only, very softly from among trees, the lost whisper of a stream in the night. . . .

Louis tore himself suddenly from the fence, passed through the gate, turned up the road to his right. He barely knew why; he even trembled, feeling a painful tightness in his breast—as if something squeezed him. Walking slowly, between the dark trees, he climbed the slope, his stunted shadow, in the moonlight, bobbing at his side.

When he reached the clearing at the summit of the hill he could see on his right the empty house and could make out, lying under the moon with a glimmer here and there, the pile of empty bottles. He paused, leaning against a tree, his head drooping, his mouth half open, and stared across the uneven ground at the black oblong of the open door. He wanted all at once to go there, but he hesitated, trembling again. Then, stumbling over an emerging root, he went forward, his hands swinging at his sides.

He could see the roof of the porch

sloping down at one corner where the wood had rotted. He could see the chimney that he had cleaned long ago, stolid on the roof. He could see a square of lighter grey, somewhere inside the house, and he knew that it was in the kitchen where the back door was still open. When he was a few feet from the crumbling wooden step, an animal, he did not know what, pattered on the ground, rustled among leaves. Louis stopped; with a sudden, bursting moan like the wail of a cat.

For a moment he stood there, knees bending, arms at his sides barely moving. But soon he turned, stumbled backward to the road, crossed it, and leaned, breathing heavily, against a tree. He rubbed his hands up and down the bark, he pressed his forehead against it, he giggled. Then, gasping suddenly, he dropped to his knees, embraced the trunk, stared with eyes wide open toward the road. Coming toward him, whence he could not tell, he heard the thud of hoofs and the monotonous rattle of light wheels.

She drove out into the moonlight, erect in a buggy, as he had seen her so many times before. Her suit in the night looked grey; but her hat was the same shape as before, and beneath it he could see her eyes, round and shining. She drew up the horse when opposite Louis and, leaning forward, still holding the whip, stared across at the empty house.

He saw her black hair curving on her fat neck, and he wanted to cry out "Polly!" but he could not utter a sound. Without moving, she sat there, looking at the vague house above her. Then the whip in her hand began to sway, backward and forward.

Again Louis tried to speak; trembling violently, he could not even move.

The whip swayed more and more, quivering at the top. All at once she gave a little cry and, jerking herself upright, tugged at the reins. The horse stamped and twisted; the wheels rasped; the buggy jolted. And all the time she was turning around, straight in her seat, arms before her, Louis could see her face twisted in the moonlight, and could hear her crying in a high, monotonous voice. Even when she started away from him abruptly he could say nothing; he crouched there, shaking; the buggy vanished down the road.

He rose to his feet at last and tottered out from the shadow. He had forgotten that he wanted to go away, where he was going. When he saw the house, silent and grey in the clearing, he almost cried out; and, stumbling in the ruts, half blinded, he started back in the direction from which he had come.

It was as if the great weight pressed him down, turned him back, forced him with shuffling feet, bowed head and dangling arms to move along the road toward the ranch-house. He could see Corbin.

"Damn Corbin!" was in his mind. "Damn Corbin!"

Between the dark trees he went, along the grey road. He wanted to topple forward and lie moaning in the dust. But he shuffled on as if a cord drew him.

He did not pause when he saw the house—standing with its barn beyond the beanfield. Entering the gate, he climbed the road, moving slowly, his head bowed, his loose arms hanging at his sides. Turning slightly to the left, he walked around the house to the rear and along the small slope near the woodshed. There was not a sound.

Near the woodpile his boot struck something hard, and he looked down. The axe lay, with its dull polish, on the ground; he picked it up by the handle, almost without stooping. When he entered the kitchen, closing the door behind him, the two dogs trotted forward silently, sniffing.

They burst into cries at the first sound of tumult in the house; they ran yelling forward, their hair bristling, and cast themselves with thuds against the door. They snarled, they barked, they clawed. Then they were still for a moment, and the thumps and scrapings within ceased, too, and for

a moment there was only the heavy silence of the night, with the bursting moon throwing grey light on to the world.

The dogs howled again and fell back when the door flew open. Something whirled toward them, scraping along the ground, and they yelped. Then a black figure, leaning forward, ran moaning away into the hills.

CHAPTER XVIII

BUDDY WEST, driving his Ford to the ranch, found Corbin on the following day. It was he who told the news in town.

And Buddy West was a member of the posse that captured Louis. They found him, three days later, crouching beneath a manzanita bush at the side of a road in a distant valley.

"He wuz almost on the ground," Buddy related months afterward. "We calls to him to stand up, but he lets out a yell and starts runnin'. He was black all over. God! He must a' been lyin' in a ditch all night. Well, Jake he takes a crack and Louis tumbles down. When we got up to him he wuz lyin' on his back, yellin' up at us. Then he died. —Yeah."

Examining Louis' body, the doctors found him a criminal of the very worst type. There was the head, the jaw, everything. And soon they forgot him.

For a while they talked of Corbin in the valley.

"A fine man," old McCray used to say, red and puffing on the hotel verandah. "Never knew a finer man, never. And all he did for that Louis!"

Then McCray died, others followed, and those who remained talked of different things.

Into Corbin's ranch-house moved a family of cousins, his only heirs. The man works in the field, makes money, and has painted the house. The woman, fat and domestic, keeps the old kitchen clean as her own face, and often stands laughing in the doorway, her hands on her hips, and calls in a great voice to her children.

No one in P—— ever saw Polly again. Years later, in a Honolulu hospital, a woman died who had given her name as "Polly Brown." In her final delirium she talked wildly of a murder at night, and of mountains. But no one paid any attention.

* * * * *

The deserted house on the summit of the hill stands grey and fragile in its clearing. Without knowing why, people of the canyon are afraid of the place. Boys who go hunting and fishing among the hills steal by rapidly at night, shuddering; and, sitting around their fires, tell one another strange tales of how it is haunted. On moonlight nights, despite the coating of dust, an empty bottle glimmers here and there.

The rains of the winter tear cruelly at the rotten boards. Last year another post on the verandah crumbled away; the roof slopes more than ever; only one step before the door is solid; and that, too, is going.

The house is like an old, withering face on which age descends.

IT'S always so pleasant to teach a beautiful girl anything. They learn so slowly.

FOUR ONE-REEL MOVIES

By Benjamin De Casseres

I

Theodore Dreiser

A FATHER is murdering his daughter.
Three blocks away a daughter is murdering her father.
In a theatre between the two an actor is playing "King Lear."

II

George Bernard Shaw

At ten minutes to eight every star is in his dressing-room robing for the first act.

At eight o'clock every theatre burns down simultaneously.

At dawn a figure is seen strolling through the ruins playing a *Te Deum* on a jew's-harp.

III

James Branch Cabell

Adam and Eve fasten on their belts of fig leaves.

They go forth from the Garden to attend a meeting of the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

A prankish serpent slips up behind them and unhooks the clasps of their belts as they enter the hall.

IV

Anatole France

A ventriloquist stands in the middle of the universe with a marionette on either side of him, one labelled God, the other Satan.

A tremendous argument is going on between the marionettes.

The ventriloquist is suffering with spasms of stomachic laughter at the awed faces of his uncountable stellar audience.

THE BELIEVER

By L. M. Hussey

I

MADAME MAYS, a successful psychic in the city, chanced to consult Dr. Bernd for a minor nervous disorder, probably induced by the neurotic strain of her frequent trances. Prior to their meeting as physician and patient, these two had known nothing about each other. Madame Mays, having rented a new establishment near Bernd's consulting-rooms, chose him for consultation merely on account of convenience.

When she entered his consulting-room he was considerably surprised. Her appearance was unusual. She bore no resemblance to his ordinary patients.

She came in somewhat majestically, and with a fantastic air that, originally cultivated as a part of her professional manner, was now inseparable from her usual deportment.

Her clothes were strange. She wore a large black hat elaborately decorated with cut-jet beads and set off by a black plume slanting cavalierly at the side. Her gown, too, maintained the black motif, modulated by lace insertion in front and a surprising panel of dark purple brocade running the length of the back. Her ample figure was uncorseted.

The doctor, seated austerely at his desk, was first attracted by her dress, but in a moment her face and gestures took all his attention.

Her hair was brilliantly red, and it seemed to be unusually profuse, for two heavy strands came down from under her hat and completely concealed her ears. She had scarcely any eyebrows and whatever colour her face held naturally was wholly concealed by such a thick layer of powder that she looked almost like a harlequin in make-up. Her lips were unpainted. She had a ghastly appearance.

But her eyes compelled attention. They were very large, reddish brown in colour, and she had the peculiar trick of opening them suddenly, without any reason, into a fixed and astonishing stare.

She seated herself in the empty chair at the doctor's side and began to tell him her symptoms, rationally enough. But she accompanied her recital with a series of movements that almost entirely distracted his professional interest.

More than anything else, perhaps, her gestures were arresting. The chief one was accomplished by a swift thrusting out of her plump hands, whereupon the fingers were extended tautly and then suddenly clenched into two rounded fists. This gesture was employed indiscriminately as the auxiliary of various emotions, and sometimes the two fists were almost under Dr. Bernd's disapproving nose.

He was by no means prepossessed in favour of Madame Mays. She was not the ordinary patient of his consulting-room.

Dr. Bernd was a highly respectable man. Years before, shortly after setting up in practice, he had joined a large church and the best part of his connection had been built up among the congregation. They all knew him well. They all respected him.

Whilst Madame Mays explained her symptoms he glanced alternately at her face and at the glass plate on his desk. She was quite voluble and he found it

unnecessary to ask many questions. He was frowning a little. Now and then he compressed his lips, whereupon his neat grey moustache protruded somewhat harshly.

Presently, after he had learned all about the vague pains in her shoulders and the neuralgic shootings in her chest, he began to inquire into her history.

"Will you tell me something about your occupation?" he asked.

She answered after a short stare that, passing the doctor, seemed to penetrate the materiality of the wall behind his head.

"I'm a medium," she replied.

Dr. Bernd looked up at her swiftly, not fully enlightened.

"A psychic," she explained.

He was not surprised—but he was disconcerted. He wondered why she had come to him, by whose recommendation. To a degree she made him uncomfortable.

"You mean a professional spiritualist?" he asked.

She did not reply; she assented by her silence.

Dr. Bernd tapped his fingers on the edge of his desk. His frown became fixed.

"I'm afraid, Madame," he said, "that your profession is the cause of your trouble. I have never attended what you might call a séance—but, whatever chicanery may be connected with it, I don't doubt that it results in an abnormal nervous strain to the—medium. It will be difficult to help you."

Madame Mays listened, but seemed to ignore entirely the scarcely concealed condemnation of her practices that the doctor put not only into his words, but conveyed also in the strained inflections of his voice.

Apparently she took his conclusions in a complimentary way. A certain martyred look came into her eyes, like that of one who will continue to serve a cause despite its demand of sacrifice and its hurt.

She lowered her eyes, speaking in a subdued voice.

"When I get an easy 'contact,'" she said, "it's not so hard. But some of the ones on the Other Side just barely make you feel their influence, yet you can't get 'contact.' That does me up frightfully. I feel just like a wrung-out rag. Sometimes they leave me with a fit of shaking all over that doesn't go away for hours."

Dr. Bernd listened with some astonishment. The woman had ignored his rebuff, and now she was speaking to him as if he believed in the seriousness and legitimacy of her efforts.

She was elaborating.

"There's a young dancer that's trying to get contact with me now. She passed to the Other Side in a shipwreck. I've felt that much. Twice I've just got a glimpse of her. She has long curls, gold, I think, big blue eyes, kind of pathetic lips, and a wonderful figure. But somehow we can't hold each other's influence. I understand she's lonely, she seems to want some man. The poor thing has hurt me more than any of the others."

This astonished confession brought a naïve and at the same time brutal question to the physician's lips.

"Do you mean to tell me that you are sincere?" he asked. "Are you trying to make me *believe* you?"

Again, more surprisingly now, she ignored the intent of his words. She continued to elaborate about the dancer. Her sentences were embroidered with vague technicalities that were in a measure bewildering.

Dr. Bernd listened with an increasing discomfort, yet at the same time with an undeniable interest. The woman had considerable descriptive power. In her voluble way, she could summon up images, present a word picture. Just why she presumed him to be interested in the imaginary dancing girl gave him seconds of uneasy speculation. He felt almost as if, by an uncanny clairvoyance, she had seen into some of the unadmitted secrets of his heart.

Her recital made him nervous. Nevertheless, he did not accuse her again.

On parting she took his hand and

pressed his fingers with a touch of intimacy.

"Doctor," she said, "I wish you'd come to a sitting."

He replied only by a frown. She nodded, leaving the consulting-room by the side door that opened on the hall.

After her going Dr. Bernd reseated himself in the familiar chair by his desk. For some time he did not ring for the next patient.

Indeed, he was unaccountably upset. The woman left behind her the spell of a peculiar influence. Her effect was morbid and pathological.

Dr. Bernd thought about the dancing girl.

For just an instant he indulged in a wild fancy.

Suppose there were truth in these doctrines! In such circumstances, he might not be alone in that room. Anywhere, within the visible limits of the walls, a companion might be near him, some girl, perhaps . . . one like the dancing girl . . . in draperies, pirouetting, for him alone, concealed from others. . . .

Then he thought of his wife, so recently dead. His cheeks flushed. He looked about him swiftly. His shameful thoughts startled him. Clenching his fists, he expelled a harsh breath.

Presently, more composed, he touched the button that communicated with the outer room.

II

Bernd was born in a Western State. When he was a young boy his parents died suddenly during the course of a local pneumonia epidemic. Then he was brought East to live with an uncle, who figured largely in shaping his life, his nature, and his peculiar conscience.

He was not a brilliant boy, nor particularly self-assertive. The uncle never had any trouble with him, for he obeyed without question.

Chiefly he was brought up in what was called a "moral atmosphere," in which he thrived readily enough. He never had any thought of revolt. The principles of his guardian's belief were familiar to his heredity; he absorbed them naturally, like a sustenance.

During the first week in his new home he was taken to church, and, barring several absences excusable by good reasons, he had gone, first to this church and later, to the one he now attended, ever since. Here he learned the peculiarities of the dissenter's faith. He was taught to bawl the hymns, to listen to the pastor, to recite the psalms in concert. As he grew older he mastered the modifications of English verbs when "thou" is used, and so he became accomplished in private and public prayer. Once, at the close of a fund-raising campaign for the church, he led all the other youths in the sum of money turned in; he was gradually esteemed for his steadiness and zeal.

After graduating from high school he entered a medical school; the profession was chosen, for some obscure reason, by his uncle. He was now in late adolescence, and girls were troubling him greatly.

He longed to be married, and in thinking of women he made very little selection; nearly any woman seemed desirable as a wife.

He used to watch girls on the streets and in the trolley cars and it gave him a warm, happy feeling to imagine one of them entirely his own. If he exercised any choice at all it was rather to select the plainer women, even, at times the downright bad-looking ones — not because he was unresponsive to the charm of a pretty face, but because he was somehow afraid of the really pretty girls.

In considering them he felt a personal inadequacy. Their vivacity frightened him and this fear was readily translated into disapproval. He did not like good-looking women, for in the perversity of his mental processes he esteemed their charm a badge of something obscurely shameful.

Living in the relatively loose atmosphere of a medical college, he stood aloof from the obscenities of his fellow-students. He yielded to none of their

lax affairs, and although his rectitude brought no ease to him, it gave him a certain superior opinion of himself.

He knew that he was better than the others. He congratulated himself upon his personal strength. Although he did not stand at the front of his classes, his sense of superiority was not lessened. According to his thinking, he possessed qualities more important than those that led to high marks.

When he graduated his uncle set him up in practice.

Then, a year later, just before the death of his uncle, he married.

The marriage was a surprise. He had never spoken about such a thing to the old man upon whom he was dependent, for he was afraid of definite opposition —an opposition which, if disregarded, would mean the loss of all those funds so necessary to him at this point in his career. But one day he could stand the restraint no longer; he married and then went to his guardian to confess.

His approach was a very humble one, and by this demeanour he was saved. The old man abused him, told him that it was immoral not to wait, not to have prepared honestly for the support of the woman whom he chose—but it all ended in forgiveness.

Bernd had met his wife at church. She was a quiet, somewhat stupid girl; she had little to say, but to young Bernd her reservations were vastly provoking. They went out together in the conventional way and shortly after the secret engagement they used to kiss each other when alone. There was nothing very fervid about their love-making.

But the young man engauded it with his private imaginings of which he was ashamed. The very fact that his girl said so little, did so little, enhanced her possibilities, made her charm unfathomable.

Although, after marriage, none of these florid fancies was realized, he never definitely admitted his disappointment. At any rate, he had achieved a certain ease, and the lack of entire satisfaction only served to develop his austerity and to maintain his sense of superiority.

Yet, now and then, he was bedeviled by temptation. A woman, coming to consult him professionally, would smile. And then, occasionally for days, he would go about with a white face and a curiously strained appearance. His friends interpreted these visible phenomena as the results of overwork.

But mainly his home life moved along with calm and full propriety. His outward life was without incident, and if any story were to be told of him it would have to deal with the obscure repressions within his heart.

When his wife died he lamented her sincerely and wept at her grave. He considered the statement of the pastor, officiating there, proper and justified. He was told that she had gone to a felicitous other world and that he must temper the hurt of his bereavement with the knowledge that later he would meet her there.

Of these propositions Dr. Bernd made no question.

III

It was after the third visit of Madame Mays, still under treatment, that Dr. Bernd confided to her a singularly insincere want.

He told her in a low voice, almost furtively, only once or twice daring to meet her peculiar eyes.

The strangeness of his insincerity lay in the fact that he himself was almost deluded. There were many moments when he did not doubt the entire purity of his motives. Yet, in other instants he was conscious of an ulterior desire beneath his admitted wanting. But he never contemplated this, he never fully acknowledged it, nor thought about it, nor put it into words.

He asked Madame Mays if it were possible for him to communicate with his wife.

Even now, although she had begun to influence him, and the rigours of his first full disapproval were gone, he did not entirely trust or believe her. But

the tormenting strength of his strange, inner, unadmitted wish brought him finally to a measure of credence. At least he felt that he could test her.

He finally made an appointment with her and one evening he called at her establishment. She occupied a tall, old house in a row of similar houses; there was nothing fantastic in the outward appearance of the place and to some extent this was reassuring.

Indoors, his favourable impression was continued. He was received by an ordinary maid and conducted into a conventional drawing-room. Its furnishings were a little elaborate, but save for a piece of sculpture or two it differed very little from the usual drawing-room or "parlour" of the homes to which he was ordinarily called in the practice of his profession.

He sat down in a red upholstered chair and presently Madame Mays herself appeared and greeted him.

Her deportment was familiar. Of course, her peculiarities were somewhat more obvious. She wore no hat; the masses of her red hair seemed to burn like a flame on her head. Her excessively powdered face was more ghastly in this artificial light.

But she extended her hand with sufficient naturalness.

"We'll go upstairs, Doctor," she told him. "Of course, we mustn't be interrupted. I'll do my best to get the connection for you. I think we'll be successful. My powers feel strong tonight."

At this moment Dr. Bernd was the victim of two opposing emotions. The one was his natural shrinking, his ordinary disbelief in this sort of thing, a lingering flare-up of his incredulity. The other was a complex sense of agitation and expectancy: he might be on the threshold of something, of an unspoken desire. He felt, moreover, an emotion of shame, a suppressed, inner consciousness of sinfulness. But he followed behind the broad back of Madame Mays, who led the way upstairs.

They went into a somewhat less conventional room, but still not fantastic enough to upset that delicate, unstable balance at which Dr. Bernd's emotions rested. It was smaller than the apartment below and more simply furnished. There were several straight-backed chairs, a plain centre-table, bare and uncovered, and sofa, a pedestal lamp with a violet shade, at present lighted. The carpet was thick, the walls were without pictures. Long, dark green curtains hung down over what were probably the front windows.

Madame Mays seated herself at the table and motioned to the doctor to take the chair opposite. She asked him to place his hands upon the table. Then, by means of a switch on the wall behind her, she turned out the light.

For a few moments the room seemed entirely dark. After this interval Bernd was able to discern the medium across the table. She was sitting very stiffly with her head bent back; he rather sensed than saw that her eyes were wide open, fixed permanently in that astonishing stare. He could not hear her breathe.

A second later he was startled by a series of sharp, emphatic knocks proceeding from a point above his head.

"What is that?" he cried.

Madame Mays was silent.

The raps were repeated, a whole chorus of them, sounding in different parts of the dark room.

Urged by his secret desire, the doctor yielded himself to credulity; his eyes widened, he leaned across the table, he turned his head from side to side, peering into the darkness, searching for the presentation of immaterialities. The flush on his cheeks was unseen in the darkness.

IV

No one was aware of his frequent visits to Madame Mays, nor of his new faith, until he abruptly announced it during a prayer meeting at his church. Coming from his lips, it made a profound stir.

He told nothing of Madame Mays, the intermediary.

He arose to speak after an elder in the church had fervently expressed his full confidence in another world.

"And some day, if many of us have not done so already, we will be able to speak to the loved ones on the other side, and hear the revelation from their lips."

As the speaker sat down Dr. Bernd arose. His closely cut moustache seemed greyer, the lines of his face were acute, his eyes glowed as if from a deep, inner exulting. Respectful faces were upturned to his.

"What our brother has predicted for the future has already happened to me," he began. "I have talked with my dead wife!"

He paused; his startling words were not at first comprehended. Then understanding like a wave rippled through the ranks of his listeners; a sharp sound, like that of a sudden sigh, arose from the congregation, the simultaneous inhalations of many breaths.

"In a certain place," he went on, "she has come to me and talked to me; I am sure. But last night I *saw* her. It was not in the usual place, but in my own home, and I was alone. I was in bed, it was after midnight, and I awoke, thinking of . . . of her—"

Dr. Bernd appeared to falter and two red spots, almost like a blush of shame, appeared in his cheeks. In the church there was entire silence. He recovered himself and continued.

"I was thinking of her—and then I found her seated at the foot of my bed. She was looking at me, she was smiling. She was very real; there was nothing ghostly about her appearance; she seemed to sit there as naturally as she had done in the days when she was with me, in the flesh. I was not frightened, but I hesitated to speak, in the fear that my voice would make her leave. I lay there silently. We looked at each other for some minutes. Presently I had a great impulse to turn my head. I took my eyes from her face and when I looked again she was gone!"

It was a recital that affected many of these people like a revelation. Before he could leave the church that evening many of the congregation crowded about Bernd and seized his hands, pressing them silently. No one disbelieved him; he was not only a good man but a scientific one, and such a man is not deceived. There were tears in the eyes of many. One woman came close and whispered her passionate thanks.

"You have given us all a wonderful renewed hope," she said.

But Bernd scarcely saw the crowd about him, nor heard their words. He was curiously confused. After a while he found himself on the street going home alone.

Then his mind cleared somewhat. He began to speculate upon the impulse, impromptu and startling, that had led him to that evening's confession. Again and again he realized that he had never intended it. And, moreover, he had presented the situation falsely.

It seemed to him at last that confession had been a necessity, confession of some character, however twisted from the truth. The vision of the night before, even if he only half believed in its authenticity, had wrung his emotions violently. By speaking of it he had relieved, to a certain measure, an abominable tension.

He had not been entirely awake when the thing had happened; that had been realized after the passing of the phantom had startled him into full wakefulness. Many times during the day he had tried to rationalize his experience, persuading himself that the figure had been no more than a presence in a nightmare, a reasonable conclusion ordinarily.

But here his inner secret obtruded itself, that hidden, inner wanting. With the knowledge of *that*, he was torn with the fear that his wife's coming might have been authentic.

In a half-waking, nightmarish state he had found her seated at his bedside. His first emotion, instead of surprise, had been one of regret in that *she* had come instead of that *other* one. Then

he found that his wife's eyes, meeting his own, were charged with wrath and reproach. She seemed to look into his heart, witnessing the regret of that other instant and his shame. Rousing himself, she was gone.

Dr. Bernd now reached his street; he ascended the hollow marble steps in front of his house and opened the door. He passed through the corridor, and ascending the stairs, went into his bedroom.

He did not light the light. Near the window was a small *escritoire* and the light of an arc on the street came in through the window, illuminating this with a ray like that of an artificial moon. He crossed the room and seated himself, half his figure falling within the pale illumination.

The complexity of his mood had resolved itself into one of resisting sullenness. He no longer felt any shame. Vaguely, he saw that he had been cheated, that there was still a monstrous, celestial conspiracy to cheat him. All his life of harsh repressions appeared to him now as the malignant result of this conspiring.

Suppose, then, the figure had been real! She came to thwart him, in death as she had in life. She approached him from another world, with her jealous restraint, with her scorn, with her diabolic accusing.

He sprang up swiftly. His whole tormented soul was in revolt. Staring into the darkness, feeling within him the strength of an abandon that in this instant swept aside all his life-long faiths—his hope of future reward, his ancient pride in his superiority—he sought madly to summon for his delight that spirit of his inner hope, the one whom he now admitted was his only need and wanting.

And then she seemed to come to him—in the form that Madame Mays had first described her!

She sprang out of nothingness, immaterial and desired. Her garments were like shifting clouds, moving with the rhythm of her. She danced before him without sound, ever meeting his eyes, smiling and looking into them.

It was his dancing girl!

Dr. Bernd opened his eyes and stepped toward her. She had come to him at last, alone, in the darkness, away from all eyes, for his solace.

He ran toward her.

None of the servants heard the sound as he fell headlong over a chair.

His sudden death from apoplexy stirred those who knew him deeply, but none so much as those who had been in the church during his confessional. For, when they viewed his body, they found upon his face a look of ecstasy in death.

The group who heard the minister preach at his grave were moved to tears. There was a profound significance in his concluding words. He said:

"Our brother has gone, but even before the last parting I believe that light assuredly came to him. We have looked upon his countenance to-day. We have seen the radiance there. Be sure, our brother saw his loved ones, and spoke to them, as they came to take him to his eternal rest."

LOVE is the folly that makes young men try to grow moustaches and old men shave them off.

MEMORIES

By Kenneth Andrews

THE church was thronged for the fashionable wedding. The fragrance of many flowers hung heavily in the gloom of the vast auditorium. The stained windows, the thick shadows, the sombrely brooding yellow lights, the lofty, fretted ceiling swathed in twilight: all these blended in melancholy beauty.

The bride, in her gown of white, seemed very small, very humble, very beautiful. A radiance, almost of holiness, seemed for the moment to play about her.

The groom was erect and confident. His sturdy, black-clad form was good to look upon.

The voice of the clergyman crept out over the heads of the congregation. There was a hush.

". . . If there be any here . . . let him speak now . . . or for ever after . . . hold his peace. . . ."

In one of the dim corners far to the rear of the church a girl bowed her head and smoothed an imaginary wrinkle from her glove.

In another dim corner a young man cleared his throat softly and blew his nose.

The ceremony proceeded.

THE QUEST

By George O'Neil

SOMEHOW, this hour, I can remember you
With kindliness I have not felt before;
I can recall unhappiness we knew
As poignant music that is played no more. . . .

Now our old moments, silently arrayed,
Clear in the crowded shadows of my thought,
Reveal sad allegories vaguely made
Of words misunderstood and truths uncaught. . . .

And these are all . . . and this is all they teach,—
That love must be as silent as the rest . . .
And that the eloquence we strove to reach
Hastened the end of our pathetic quest.

A MAN'S MIND

By A. Ueland Taylor

I

ALL the while she dressed she kept coming back smiling to her mirror. It wasn't so much an interest in her own comely reflection that drew her (though she had a pleased eye for that too), as it was the open page of a letter that was propped up against the glass. In the midst of brushing her hair she would pause, her brush vaguely lifted, to read it again. It was only a brief note:

"Dear Mary,—I have something to tell you—the most important thing. Perhaps you know. I'll come for you at seven, if that's all right, and we'll have dinner somewhere. Yours,

"J. N."

She went singing to her closet and pulled down a vivid green dress that she slipped over her head. The bell rang, and with a last brush to her ruffled brown hair, she ran to the door.

"It's you!" she said, a little breathless, to the tall man who stood there smiling at her.

"It's me," said he. "Oh, Mary—" He closed the door and then turned and took her in his arms.

"You look so pretty," he said, "I'm going to kiss you."

He did kiss her, and she clung to him with her eyes closed for a second.

Then he was holding both her hands and laughing.

"Jove!" he said, "there's as much thrill to that as if you were my sister. Funny, isn't it?"

She drew away her hands and smiled faintly.

"I'm so happy I had to," he went on, exuberantly, "I want to embrace everyone! But that's what I came to tell you."

II

THEN they were in the little yellow sitting room. Mary was on the sofa, her face rather white against the bright pillows. He was in the big chair on the other side of the fire.

"Well," she said slowly. "Tell me all about her."

"She's ridiculously young. Years younger than we are. I can't describe her—she's too wonderfully delicate and flower-like. Untouched by the world. Innocent. Virginal . . ."

"Intelligent?"

"Why yes—but not in the way you mean, perhaps. It doesn't worry her. She's not a bit your type, Mary. You're a comrade—you're a good sort. We could go on being friends for years, like two men, without any sentiment between us. You couldn't do that with her. You'd have to have everything or nothing."

"What's her name?"

"Evelyn. Evelyn Ives. It's like her. She's so feminine. A little helpless. She makes you want to take care of her."

"Give me a cigarette, please. Thanks." She took one from his box, lighted it and drew a deep breath.

"She doesn't smoke," he said, smiling tenderly. "She's like lavender and roses. As if she'd been laid away in her own wedding chest. She's never cared for anyone before. And that's the wonderful part of it, to be the first,

the only one in the life of a beautiful young creature. She was brought up in a convent. A little convent girl."

"But she's interesting, too, Jim? She's a person?"

"Good heavens, she's more than that! You'd be sure to ask that. She's simply charm and beauty personified. Isn't that enough? She's not the sort of woman you are. There are things I wouldn't have her know for anything. She doesn't know—well, what we call *life*."

"Happily."

"Now there's nothing you and I can't say to each other, is there? There's nothing you don't understand. You have a man's mind—that's what I've always said about you—a man's mind. But that isn't just the thing a man looks for in the woman he's going to marry."

She nodded. "I see. No, of course not."

"But look here," he said, "it's half past seven. Shan't we be getting on? They're saving a table. We can talk just as well there as here."

She stood up, covering her eyes with her hand. "Jim, I've a horrible headache. I'm going to beg off."

"Oh—poor girl! I'm sorry. You don't want to go?"

"Think I'll have a glass of milk and go to bed."

"Can't I stay here? We'll pick up something. There's so much I want to tell you."

"Oh, no I—I want to get to bed."

"I hate to leave you, Mary, but if you feel badly . . ."

"It's all right. I'm much better alone. It's nothing. You must bring her up to see me one day soon."

"I will. Don't smoke, will you, when she comes? She wouldn't understand. I want her to like you—and I don't want you giving her any of your advanced ideas."

He was smiling at her playfully.

"I'll try to behave very nicely," she answered gravely. She opened the door for him, then held out her hand.

"Good-night."

"Good-night then. Mary, you don't mind my having kissed you? I had to, for once!"

"Of course not!" she laughed.

"You're such an old brick. Well—you'll take care of yourself? Get right to bed?"

At last, at last he went.

III

One fine day he brought Evelyn Ives to see her. He left them together almost at once, begging them to be the best of friends for his sake, and promised to return in an hour.

The girl was very talkative, once he was gone. While Mary made tea she strolled about the room with charming self-possession, picking up the books and admiring Mary's little horde of objets d'art. She looked very fragile and lovely, dawdling and chatting so prettily.

When tea was made she came back to the sofa before the fire.

Mary suddenly said, "Oh, I know! I've been trying to think where I've seen you. Aren't you the little Miss Ives I used to see in Paris? Aren't you Madame Hartman's little friend?"

"Why, yes," said the girl. "Did I ever see you there? I don't quite remember . . ."

"No, of course you wouldn't. I went very seldom to Madame Hartman's. But I do remember one day seeing you there in her studio. You sang."

"Yes, I was her pupil. I lived with her. That was the winter before last."

"How strange! He never told me you'd been in Paris. I never dreamed you'd be *that* little Miss Ives. Everyone who knew Madame Hartman knew about you. She was quite mad about your voice."

"She was very nice to me."

"Well, tell me, what's become of her?"

"She's here now. I don't see much of her. You know she married again after her divorce."

"Someone told me that. She married that Swedish novelist person,

didn't she? What was his name—Delius?"

"Yes, she married Delius," said the girl slowly. "I can't imagine why. A genius of course. She used to support him practically before, but it's worse now because I believe he made her settle something on him. Madeleine's a dear, but she's a perfect *poire*. She always was about men. Especially young ones."

"To think you're *that* little Miss Ives!" murmured Mary.

"It's queer I don't remember you."

"Oh, you wouldn't. I only came in to hear the music once or twice. I never saw much of Madame Hartman and her friends. But you know I was astonished when I heard about her marriage. They always told me Delius was *your* friend—or am I thinking of someone else?"

The girl put down her cup. "Oh, we *were* rather good friends," she said. "Only, you see, I hadn't any money. He simply had to have money."

"I suppose so. So they're both here now? He's here, too?"

"I think so. Yes, I know he is."

"Hm-m. It must have been rather hard for you to leave that interesting life over there," said Mary. "What about your singing? Jim didn't say anything about that. You're not going to give it up surely?"

"I suppose I shall have to for a while. He is rather old-fashioned, he thinks I sing quite well enough as it is. He likes my voice, but I don't believe he could bear the idea of concerts. I have a feeling he isn't awfully sympathetic about my studying in Paris. I don't say much about it . . ."

"But you haven't given it up?"

"There's no need for hurrying things, is there? I hate to worry him about it. I'm only twenty-one, and in a year or so I'm sure I'll be able to persuade him to take me abroad again. He might be able to leave his work for a year or so. At least he could come over every now and then to see me."

"He would want to be with you," said Mary. "He couldn't let you go."

For a moment she busied herself with the tea things, pouring her guest a second cup, offering her the sandwiches. After a little silence the girl said:

"I'd a little rather, if you don't mind, that you wouldn't—that we shouldn't talk too much about Paris when he is here. And Delius. He wouldn't approve of Delius. He wouldn't understand my knowing him."

"Oh," said Mary, "wouldn't he?"

"Well, perhaps not. He knows about my being in Paris of course. But he thinks more of the convent. You know I went over to go into a convent. Before they found I had a voice. And I spoke to him of Madame Hartman once. He thinks she's dreadful."

"But still, you're planning to go back, aren't you?"

"Yes, but I give myself a year. Once we're married he can't go on expecting me to be a little convent girl for ever."

"Oh, he'll not be so unreasonable," said Mary.

"Men are so queer . . . but I think it will turn out all right. Is that the bell?"

"Yes, there he is," said Mary, going toward the door.

"You won't then, will you?" said the girl quickly.

"Tell him about Delius? Of course not!"

He came in fairly radiating happiness and triumph.

"I can't let you have her any longer," he said jovially. "We're going out to hunt for a flat." He looked down tenderly at Evelyn. "Go get your things on, child."

IV

While Evelyn was in Mary's bedroom putting on her coat, the others had a few moments to themselves.

"Well?" he demanded, dropping into the sofa beside her. "Isn't she rather wonderful?"

"Jim," said Mary quickly, "are you sure—quite sure?"

He stared. "Of course I'm sure!" he exclaimed. Then more coldly, "What do you mean—you don't like her?"

"I mean—sure of yourself—sure you know enough about her? I mean, do you *know* her?"

"There's no use our talking about it," he said, with hostile dignity. "I thought you wouldn't like her. She's not your kind."

"Perhaps not," said Mary.

"I don't want to be brutal. But, thank God, she's not your kind!"

Mary smiled at his violence. He went on:

"You're not even capable of seeing how wonderful she is. You have to reason, probe, speculate, use your head instead of your feelings, until everything is spoiled! Oh, your mind!" he cried in exasperation. "If you could only forget it!"

"My dear old Jim, you are ridiculous. If you're sure you'll be happy, it's all right with me. That's all I want. And of course I appreciate her. Perhaps as much as you do, in another way. She's perfectly charming. Wonderful to look at!"

"Well, that's better," he said in his old friendly voice. "I didn't know what you were driving at. That's more like it."

Then he added, half jesting, half serious. "Mind, I don't mean to let you spoil her! You're not what I call a good influence for a young girl."

"Hands off!" she agreed. "I leave her all to you."

Evelyn appeared in the doorway, looking like a fabulous princess in her furs.

"James darling," she said, "I'm ready."

BLISS

By Herbert Darnell

HE sat by the fireside watching the flames dance in the grate. He was happy, supremely happy. There was infinite satisfaction in contemplating his bliss. This day was his golden anniversary. Fifty years ago he had determined not to marry.

EGOTISM in a man is the belief that he knows more important things than the men around him. In a woman it is the belief that she knows more important men than the women around her.

FOLLOWING the platonic kiss on the brow, comes the semi-platonic one on the cheek. With the one on the lips, good-bye Plato, hello Epicurus!

THE VESTAL VENUS

By C. A. Harper

MISS SYLVIA DOWNER had given each girl a good-night kiss on her left cheek, and had seen them all flock up the broad stairs to their rooms. She had talked sweetly with her two resident teachers for half an hour, and then she, too, had gone to her room.

A very comfortable room it was. The maid had already drawn the shades, lighted the reading lamp, and prepared the bed. On the table under the lamp were books, very proper books, such as the head-mistress of a successful girls' school ought to read. They furnished useful coversation at the dinner table, and she could always be sure that none of the girls would have read them. There were "Travels in Korea," the letters of an English bishop lately dead, memoirs of a Russian princess (there were always, before the war, new memoirs of Russian princesses to be had), and a magnificently illustrated history of Egypt, along with half a dozen other histories less splendid, but more solid as to reading matter.

On the mantelpiece, between two brass candlesticks, gleamed the solitary ornament of the room, a large gold cross set as an inlay in a block of wood which had been left in its natural colour, but smoothed to a satiny finish. An enclosing frame with doors a-wing suggested the possible concealment of this one object of beauty if eyes more profane than those of the owner were likely to rest upon it.

It was a chaste and maidenly room, as well as a comfortable one. But if you looked from the cross to the mistress of the room, you had the same feeling you might have had if you had stepped from a nunnery into a temple of Venus, and met the goddess herself at the door. Not that she wore roses and scant draperies. But a full white breast and throat rose above the décolleté black velvet gown which was her usual evening costume, and a swirl of yellow hair swept around her head, from the nape of a white neck to the white broad brow. She was a Titian Venus, voluptuously fair and beautiful, and as a Titian Venus should be, a woman in the prime of middle life, in full flower.

Yet she was the head-mistress of a school for girls, and she kept a cross of gold on her mantelpiece.

Little by little the house settled to sleep. Miss Downer read the travels in Korea until even the lights of the resident teachers were out. Then deliberately she put aside the yellow book of travels, crossed to her dressing-table, and from a fluffy rose sachet drew out a key, with which she opened a chimney closet.

From the shelves she took down a great pile of magazines, women's magazines, story magazines, "cheap" magazines, all the things which she reproved her girls for reading. As she passed her door she shut and locked it. And then, in the safe seclusion of midnight, behind her locked door, she began to read every love story, every story of adventure, that she could find. The detective stories and the slum stories she skipped. But she read twice every story of a shop-girl who chose the easy path of love, pleasure, and shame, and every story of a man who fought his way through Alaskan cold or tropic

heat to the satisfaction of a savage love. She read three times the stories of happy young love and happier young motherhood.

She ended the evening with those women's magazines which thrive by the propaganda of sex. If a woman does not marry, if she does not bear children, she would better die, she would better never have been born, for her life is frustrate and vain. This is their teaching.

When Sylvia Downer first began these secret orgies she resisted such teaching. She reminded herself of the vestal virgins of Rome, or virgin queens and powerful abbesses in the middle ages, of countless useful, unknown women of all ages who never married, and lived to an active old age, and enjoyed themselves, and were needed in the world. The insidious poison worked slowly, but it worked.

Sylvia Downer began to feel that her life was a failure. She could no longer see herself as admirable and enviable. The adulation of school-girls no longer exalted her in her own eyes. She had prepared hundreds of girls for sane and intelligent living—for hers was really a good school, well organized under capable teachers. But this actual accomplishment no longer was significant. She yielded to the teaching of the modern story. She was neither wife nor mother. She aroused no man's love. She was a failure.

This was in mid-winter. The next summer Sylvia Downer was found drowned in a New Hampshire lake, beside her overturned canoe. She had gone out alone, at night. She was an expert paddler, a good swimmer, and yet she was drowned. It was very strange.

No one thought of suicide because no one but Sylvia Downer herself knew that she knew that her life was a failure.

The next autumn there were resolutions from head-mistresses' associations, expressing regret because such a useful life had ended. Grateful pupils established a memorial scholarship in the college from which she was graduated. There were letters in the newspapers to extol her, and hold her up as an example to other women. A thin little book was privately printed, with some of her letters to pupils, and a few of her morning talks in school, and her picture, and a picture of the cross which stood alone between the candlesticks on her mantelpiece.

A MAN waits for the right woman to come along. A woman takes the first man she sees and then waits for the right one to come along.

SOME women allow their husbands to kiss them for the sake of contrast.

TWILIGHT ADVENTURE

By Lawrence Vail

I

NINETTE is delightful. She is so unlike my wife.

I watch them both as I take my evening meal.

Across the table sits Adèle, where she has sat so often, where I suppose she will sit at mealtime till the finish of her days. I look at her soft pink face; too soft I find it, and too pink. Vainly I search it for a characteristic irregularity of line, anything expressive of emotion.

A mild despair swells in me: I find nothing to stir my curiosity, nothing on which to fasten my gaze. Her large vague eyes of some lustreless tone which is neither blue nor grey, her large vague nose, her full dry lips seem more like stains than features. I have the impression that her face would melt into the furniture were it not for her hair, her masses of lemon hair, a monstrous paradox above the desert of her face.

She balances a ladle between her plump fingers, and pours into a plate a grey anæmic fluid. Ninette stands at her side—thin, dark, alert. How brittle of bone, beside my florid, estimable wife! How quick of limb and nerve! She has pointed eyebrows, pointed ears, and a quaint, abrupt trick of turning her head as though the hinges of it needed oil. Save for her nose, childishly, fatuously *retroussé*, she might be gothic.

Dinner is over. We are in the drawing-room, the long day behind us, the interminable night before us. Adèle sits rigidly on the edge of her chair. She is knitting a brown scarf; her rapidly moving fingers stir me to wonderment. There must be some vibrant nerve, some live and dancing blood within those plump fingers, beneath those rings of flesh that overlap the rings of metal. And if there be nerves in her fingers, she must have other nerves—in her arms, in her feet, in every part and corner of her. There must be thoughts—thoughts electric with faith and contradiction, behind her smooth untroubled forehead. Strange, I never thought of it before! It may be that I have forgotten. And I have had leisure to forget. We have been married twenty years.

I stretch my legs towards the grate, relax in my chair, revel in the comfort of the cushions. Adèle, poor woman, is never able to relax. I find myself trying to imagine how she looked as a young girl. The effort causes a slight pain behind my eyes. I see in my mind the hazy picture of a blonde girl with untidy hair. I think she used to giggle at the smallest provocation. She was also, if I remember rightly, inordinately fond of cakes. I have a movement of anger towards the young man I must have been. Fondness for cakes and an aptitude for giggling are illuminating symptoms, I should have known that they could but lead to corpulence.

Ninette enters with the liqueurs. Immediately the air about us seems renewed; it seems to vibrate, to quiver.

Why does she—I wonder—grip my fancy? Is it that her blood is so close to the surface of her skin? That she makes me feel that I have blood, close also to the surface of my skin? Or is it because she carries with her some of the sweet restlessness of the great

world—of the world which is so different from the drowsy shadow world of Adèle and myself?

I wonder what Ninette thinks of me. Probably that I am an old man, spent and wilted, like his wife, who with quick meaningless movements, sits knitting her slow life away on the edge of an upholstered chair. A protest shakes me. I am not old. If I were old I would not feel what I am feeling. Then why do I refuse to move? Why do I remain supine and inarticulate, while night passes, while time passes, while life goes? I look at Adèle with resentment. It is she who holds me—like an anchor.

Ninette has gone away. Again the air settles, like a fog. Adèle lays down her knitting, raises her glass of bénédictine to her lips. Like a drop of rain in the vast Sahara, the fluid has sunken into her, leaving no trace behind it. I have a mad temptation to pour the entire bottle down her throat. Would she sing, make funny gestures, utter strange squeaks, stumble against the furniture? I am convinced that the contents of all the cellars in Paris would fail to alter her. She might swell a little—like a sponge.

I suppose I am unjust, unkind. I have, after all, many reasons to be grateful to her. She is neither tyrannical nor overbearing. She consults me about everything. I have never known her to reproach me. She never asks me where I am going when I leave the house, and when I return she never asks me where I have been.

You see, she is sure of me. And she is right to be sure of me. I can hardly imagine myself unfaithful to her, contemplate an adventure with another woman. I am unable to imagine it, but perhaps I would not mind if she were able to imagine it. But surely this is not sufficient cause to hate her.

The cause of my hatred, my brooding rancour rather, lies not wholly in her. I like to tell myself that I hate her because I am bound to her, not by affection, but by force of habit and convention; because she is a rampart against adventure; because I feel that she is leading me by the hand into old age. I like to tell myself these things because they remove the burden of the blame from me to her, because they disparage her and flatter me. But I know that a man can always sever the bond that holds him to a woman if he have the will and blood. If I hate her, it is because she reminds me, by her external presence, of the sorry coward that I am.

She is talking to me in her slow, even voice. To-morrow, she says, she is dining out. It is the monthly meeting of the ladies who entertain the blind. How she must entertain them! They are blind, however, they cannot see her, no mean compensation, did they know, for their calamity. She asks me if I wish to dine at home. Or will I have dinner at my club? She thought of giving Ninette a night off.

I tell Adèle that I shall not dine at home. On the sixteenth of every month this dialogue takes place. Since she joined the society for entertaining the blind, ten years ago, we have had a hundred and twenty similar conversations. She always makes the same suggestion. I always give her the same answer. We may live together twenty, thirty years, the blind may never grow weary of being entertained. It is possible that this conversation will repeat itself . . . how many times? My thought spins in a maze of numbers.

The clock strikes the hour of eleven. Adèle gathers her knitting into a bag, rises slowly from her chair. My thoughts circle . . . circle . . . like a sea fowl lost over ocean seeking a rock on which to pause. There is nothing to distinguish this night from other nights, this day from other days. I repeat this phrase mechanically, seeking to lose myself in the sullen reiteration of it. And suddenly I smile. One thing, one person rather, has made this night different from other nights. I feel the memory of her quivering and pulsing in me.

So she, Ninette, will have the night off to-morrow. I wonder where she

will go. Probably to some absurd young man who will take her to the moving pictures or give her a glass of something on the boulevards. I am conscious of a movement of resentment as I picture this young man. He will talk to her, make love to her, perhaps she will return his ardour.

Suddenly, against the drowsy confusion of my brain, a thought flashes, a plan is born and fashioned. How sweet, this quick pulsing of my blood, it recalls the fair gone days. I feel myself growing, stretching, beyond the close confines of my room, beyond the smug limits of myself. I have a desire to move legs and arms, to walk far and wide into the deep adventure of the city night. A thousand doubts assail me.

Of only one thing am I certain.

I shall not dine at my club to-morrow night.

II

Since ten o'clock this morning have I walked the streets, among the groaning, rolling traffic, while the great mobs strained and swayed. I moved in a sort of feverish stupor, my purpose urging me, driving me, now like a drug, now like a whip.

I could find nothing in the stores, but Henri, the coiffeur, discovered a solution to every problem. After his work was over, I could scarcely recognize myself. My hair, by nature dull and sandy, had become black and glistening. A pair of handsome whiskers dangled from my cheeks. As a butler I would not have disgraced the most aristocratic household.

I suffered, however, dismal tortures, as I paced the pavement before my house, and when Ninette appeared, a small black compact figure amid the drowsy shadows of the door, I almost failed to recognize her. She was clad in a neat suit of black and carried an umbrella in her hand. A ridiculous red flower in her hat gave her an air of piquancy, amusingly confirmed by the studied respectability of her demeanour and the black gloves covering her fingers.

I was calmed, reassured by this transformation of her; I felt the daring growing in me. I had the impression that she, too, was disguised. Surely she would assist me with my rôle.

She walked slowly, thoughtfully, with short, undecided steps. Before I could spur myself to follow her she was turning the corner of the street. An opaque mass of wall concealed her image from me. Hurriedly I began to walk.

I thought at first that I had lost her. No, there she was, across the Avenue, gazing into the lighted window of a flamboyant millinery establishment. I summoned my courage, crossed over to her. I glanced at the hats, then at her. Her eyes were cold and critical, like black, round marbles. Of a sudden a wistfulness crept into them, her lips parted. Again I turned my attention to the hats. Was it the purple toque that made her wistful, or the gorgeous creation with red cherries?

I murmured gently: "A pretty hat!"

She drew herself up haughtily, looked at me keenly, piercingly.

"Mademoiselle Ninette," I said, "will you do me the honour of dining with me to-night?"

She made as if to go away. I saw her shoulder turning on me.

"A curious invitation. I don't know as I should listen to you. I do not know you." And very quickly: "How do you know my name?"

I knew by her question that mine were the fruits of the first skirmish. Her curiosity had conquered over her sense of etiquette.

"I am the new valet of the Baron," I explained, "the Baron who lives on the third floor. I thought perhaps you would not mind having a quiet little dinner with me."

She hesitated, her eyes fell, she was paying her last homage to convention.

"There are so few people," I added, "with whom one can spend the evening. Everyone is so vulgar in our house."

My argument had its effect.

"So you, too," she said, "have noticed that? I did not know men were so particular. Yes, the servants in our house are impossible. There is not a lady or gentleman among them."

"One would think," I murmured, "that they belonged to the upper classes."

And now we are drinking coffee in the glare and hubbub of a metropolitan café. Lights are shining, numberless, reflected in the gaudy mirrors. Waiters, dexterous and smooth, glide rather than walk among the tables, as though they wore noiseless rollers beneath their shoes. Words gurgle from the hard red lips of gorgeous demi-mondaines and cleave the heavy, scented air.

I have eaten of all the dishes that the doctor has forbidden me to taste, and probably I shall be ill to-morrow. What care I about to-morrow?—it is lost in the steppes of times. Never shall I forget Ninette's ecstasy when I ordered the dinner. We have had wine, too, and after each glass she has grown more friendly and communicative. One by one her poses of respectability have fled away. She has told me a number of anecdotes concerning her masters and mistresses. We both agree that there is little to respect in the so-called upper classes.

A band of musicians wearing red jackets and wild moustaches plays a sentimental waltz. Ninette almost purrs with rapture. She is silent now, her breath forsakes her. The strains seem to stir hidden memories, to call forth buried yearnings. A sigh comes from her lips and ripples down her body. And she speaks:

"To think that to-morrow . . . all will be over!"

"Yes; to-morrow we will have to work."

"I have to darn Madame's stockings, and what stockings! There is no end to them!"

"And I have to press the Baron's trousers!"

The music has ceased its languid wail.

Ninette smiles dreamily, then tosses her head, as though relieving herself of a burden.

"What kind of a man—the Baron?"

"An old maniac," I answer. "Always out of temper till eight at night, and then he's usually drunk."

"Does he live alone?"

"He's not married. But there are always a number of women hanging about the house. And what women! They only come to eat his dinners, drink his wine, and help themselves to his money when he's drunk."

"He pays you well?"

"It would be hard to live," I answer, "if I only had my wages."

"There are tips?"

"I have to take my tips. He leaves his money everywhere when he's drunk—in his pockets, on the floor. If I don't help myself those women take it all."

"You're quite right," says Ninette. "Those women have no sense of honesty."

The table is stripped bare of cloth and dishes. It is the hour when the public changes. Gay, painted ladies give way to haggard ladies of thicker paint, insouciant dudes in evening dress to men in tweeds with weary faces. Beer takes the place of champagne.

I defy the routine of the hour and order a bottle of Pommery.

"What kind of a man is Monsieur?"

"He doesn't count," she answers. "He's under Madame's thumb. He never lifts his voice. I pity him."

I pour two glasses of the fair wine.

"Let's drink to him—poor fellow! Is he older than Madame?"

"Yes—I think so."

"Older than I?"

Her eyes appraise me critically. I feel nervous: I fear I will not stand the test. But her glance softens as she approaches her decision.

"Yes—I should say ten years older."

A thrill of pride goes through me. I insist that neither wine nor whiskers are responsible for my rejuvenation. The youth was always in me, Ninette has merely broken down the dikes that held it back. But if I am ten years

younger than yesterday, to-morrow I shall be fifty-three again.

I ask her whether Monsieur and Madame are on good terms.

"They seem on no sort of terms at all," she answers. "They never discuss, never quarrel, they hardly ever talk. I have the feeling, however, that Monsieur hates Madame. He has a way of looking at her when she is knitting as though he wished that the floor would open and swallow her. They remind me a little of a household where I served three years ago." She shudders. "Something horrible happened there!"

"Tell me about it," I asked, amused by the solemnity of her.

"It was a large house in a provincial town. I can't tell you how sad it was. So still at night that you could hear one leaf blowing down the street. We had fifteen rooms, but Monsieur and Madame only occupied five of them: the others were always kept dark. Nobody ever came to visit. Monsieur and Madame seldom went out. They sat down in front of each other three times a day. They would eat slowly, as though they felt that they must make the meal last as long as possible in order to fill the day. During the rest of the time they sat in the drawing-room, a cold, bare space where even in winter they never lit a fire. Madame would crochet, Monsieur would read the paper, they hardly ever spoke. Now and then they would look at each other, but always indirectly. You could feel the hatred in that room. Each one seemed waiting . . . waiting . . . for the other to die. And Lulu was waiting, too."

"What disagreeable people!" I say lightly, as though I had never known such dreary folk. "And who was Lulu?"

Ninette frowns, her nostrils quiver with disgust. "Lulu was the cat, a horrible black creature, large and slow and fat. She had a horrid way of looking at you with her narrow eyes that sent shivers down your spine. She seemed to be laughing at you—not kindly—viciously, as though she saw something in you that was loathsome. And somehow, when you met her eye, you were conscious of something loathsome in you. She never played, she seldom moved, she never, never purred. There were moments when I could have strangled her."

"How long did you remain in that house?"

"Over a year. More than once I was tempted to give notice, but somehow I lacked the courage. I was curious, too; I felt that something was going to happen and I wanted to be there. And things were changing. They spent less time at their meals. Winter came. It was very cold. Once I lit a fire in the parlour. Madame gave me such a look that I put it out without waiting for the order. It was then that Monsieur began to drink—little glasses of cognac, one after another, from morning till night. I found myself hoping that he would get drunk—anything to break the terrible monotony. But the more he drank the calmer he seemed to grow. And then Madame started to drink. Sometimes, late at night, a hollow laughter echoed through the house. It had nothing human in it. I was frightened the first time I heard it. It seemed to come from Lulu.

"I was fascinated. Like Monsieur and Madame and Lulu, I was waiting for something that must happen. I remember the day when the storm broke. It was the sixth of March, after dinner. I was washing dishes in the kitchen. Suddenly I heard their voices, tearing at each other. I was glad and afraid, more excited than anything else. Then I heard a shriek, and a moment later a heavy fall. I ran to the parlour. Monsieur was standing against the mantelpiece, a knife in his hand, and he was laughing, laughing. On the floor lay Madame, her skirts tangled around her waist, her fat legs stretching across the room, bleeding from a wound in her throat. I moved towards her, then I stopped. Lulu was walking around my murdered mistress, rubbing her head against her boots and

swollen knees, and purring, purring, as I had never heard her purr before."

I shudder. I have a quick movement of tenderness towards Ninette, but it is broken, interrupted by a rising panic in me. The work of accumulated rancour may be slow, but does one know whither it may tend? Perhaps I shall one day kill Adèle.

Ninette seems to have guessed my thought. She reassures me.

"Nothing will ever happen in our house. At the bottom, Monsieur and Madame are very fond of each other."

I breathe a sigh of genuine relief. I fill my glass and empty it. The good wine calms me, dispels my apprehensions. I am glad that Ninette has decided that I shall not kill Adèle.

The guests are leaving the café. One by one the lights are dying. The mirrors are cold and grey, like the mirror of my future. Ninette shivers. We rise to our feet. We walk side by side along the boulevards. My shoulder touches her shoulder, our shadows mingle with other shadows.

Ninette is tired—the hard pavement rasps her feet. I summon a taxi. The city is running from us: the houses of the city, the lamp-posts, the naked trees. Her head sinks on my shoulder. I feel the body of her, heavy and relaxed with sleep. She murmurs:

"I am so happy!"

Now I am kissing her. The listlessness passes from her: her body has the nerve and lightness of a green growing thing. Her arms are on my shoulders, her hands are on my face. And suddenly a panic seizes me. I am conscious of the smoothness of my cheek. The taxi shakes with her merry laughter.

"I felt there was something queer about you," she cries, dangling my whiskers. And then reproachfully, making a vain attempt to discern my features in the dim, uncertain light:

"Dear! why did you disguise yourself? I am sure you must be better looking without them."

The taxi stops before the door of my house. I kiss her fondly—how fondly she will never know. I am bidding farewell to so many things—to her, to whiskers, to adventure.

"You will tell me who you are?"

I tell her I shall write. With trembling fingers I fumble at the door of the taxi. She pauses on the pavement. I hear her laugh. I hear her sigh. She is lost in the drowsy shadows of the door.

Thoughts, desires surge within me; a vast, cold hopelessness possesses me. Life has come to me, life is going. I seem to be watching my own passing. A rough voice, bereft of promise, bereft of logic, is tearing at me from the night. Someone, a man, a taxi driver, wants to know where I am going.

III

To-night we have a guest to dinner, Jasper McAndrew, bachelor, traveller, dilettante, an old admirer of Adèle. He knew her long before I met her, when she used to wear short white frocks, blue bows in her hair, and yellow socks. A picture in an album shows her as a gawky child with long, shiny face, an interminable expanse of forehead, and wide, staring eyes. Jasper and Adèle were brought up together; they rolled hoops, spun tops, made mud pies. Then one day he put on long trousers and went away to school. On his return several years later, he found Adèle less noisy, considerably taller, a little more awkward. A constraint developed between them. And they fell in love.

Three years passed. Adèle grew plumper, less awkward, she acquired her passion for cream puffs. It was generally understood that some day they would be married, but this time was laid in so remote a future that they forbore to talk about it. Then I turned up to spend the summer with an aunt. I came from the city, where I imagined I had been badly treated by a married woman. My first impression of Adèle was scarcely more favourable than it is now, after twenty years of married life.

I considered her a raw, unfinished creature with more muscle than imagination.

The summer days were long, however; we were thrown together. I decided to take pity on her, to lend her novels. It would be amusing, I told myself superiorly, to awaken the woman in her. Then one afternoon, as I was reading Beaudelaire to her, she had the audacity to giggle. I was angry, so angry that I told her a number of unpleasant truths that called tears to her calm blue eyes. A minute later I found myself kissing her. She returned my caresses with a candour so pleasing to myself that I imagined I was in love with her. Before the end of the year we were married.

Dinner is over, we are spending the evening in the drawing-room. Adèle sits on the edge of her upholstered chair, knitting her interminable scarf. Jasper is talking; his words are eager, now tranquil and tender; behind them his blood stirs, his thoughts stir, active and ever curious. I am conscious of his vigor, his youth, his passion. And yet he is three years my senior. There was a time when of the two he was the more stolid, the more conservative. I was the adventurer. I had the daring. I remember his mute despair when I stole Adèle from him. He gave the impression that his life was ruined. He bore me no rancour; I was the better man. The better man! I feel like laughing, shouting. Are the better men always punished on this earth?

My gaze drifts from Jasper to Adèle. My estimable wife is smiling softly; there is humid light in her pale eyes, a hint of more vivid colour on her flabby cheeks. Jasper, the symbol of her past, is bringing the youth of her to life. I marvel at this spectacle of resurrection. The doors opens; Ninette appears, carrying a tray laden with glasses and decanters. Waves of emotion surge within me; I turn my eyes resolutely to the ground. Jasper is talking, Adèle is knitting, they see nothing, they know nothing. I am conscious of a certain pride: after all I am as young as Jasper, younger than Jasper. He would never have embarked on last night's enterprise. Poor Jasper! The idea would have never entered his honest head.

And now she has left the room. Jasper is talking, more slowly, a trifle ponderously; one feels the fatigue of his voice and brain. I hardly listen to him. I review the events of last night. I see Ninette beside me in the great gaudy restaurant. Now she sips Pommery, now she purrs to the haunting languor of a waltz, now her sharp little nails dig into the palms of my hands.

A storm of revolt sweeps through me. I am not an old man. Why should I remain with Adèle, a spectator of the slow, tepid passage of my life? I have but to write Ninette a letter, draw a cheque, hail a cab. We will have dinner, buy two tickets, a train will take us away. To Spain shall we go together, to laughing Italy and to Greece. I see her gasping at a bull fight in Seville, her eager fingers fumbling for my hand. Now we are in Naples, the blue bay before us, Vesuvius is wooing the clouds. We will always be together, always alone, no one will ever interrupt us.

But will she always wish to be alone? We will meet people, we will meet other men. And there are so many young men in the world, men agile, strong, with wild blood in their veins. Of course she will be grateful to me. The path is short, however, from gratitude to hatred. She may come to resent me as I resent Adèle.

I feel that I must see Ninette at once. The fire is dying in the grate. I ring the bell, I ask her for kindling, for a couple of logs. I look at her straight in the eye. Strange, her eyes are in my eyes, yet she seems not to see me. She is looking through me, beyond me: I might be a chair, a window. How placid she is, going about her work; how composed and controlled! She cannot have felt anything last night; she could not, otherwise, be so cool and calm. There would be a glint in her eye, a sadness hovering on her lip.

It is half-past ten. Jasper has gone away. My estimable wife sits knitting

on the edge of her chair. Till the end of her time I shall watch her knitting, till the end of her time or mine. After all I have nothing to complain of. I shall never starve. I shall eat a good meal three times a day. I shall sleep in an honest bed every night. I shall slip easily, without jar and pain and struggle, from death in life to death in death.

Adèle is talking to me. She mentions the name of Ninette. The girl, she says, has given trouble: she is careless, she does not get on with the cook. Her friend, Madame Bourgoin, knows a certain Jeanne, older than Ninette, more settled in her ways, who would like a steady position. Adèle is contemplating giving Ninette a week's notice. Have I any objection?

I am tired—very tired. For three days forces have been battling within me; they have left but a weary husk of a man. Adèle, Ninette, Jasper, Jeanne are all indifferent to me; they have no part in my life. I have only one desire—to sleep, far away from all stress and trouble, till the end of my listless time.

I tell Adèle that I leave all domestic arrangements in her hands.

THE FARE

By Lawrence M. Wilson

THE car was in a commotion.

The very idea of it!—to accuse a gentleman of not paying his fare.

An old lady voiced bitter feelings against the conductor, the street railway, and the world in general.

Two pretty girls protested loudly in my favour.

An old gentleman touched me on the arm—he would see it through to the end; he could swear I paid.

I hate such scenes; never will I let it occur again.

* * * * *

The next time I ride in a street-car I will pay my fare!

IF you want to know what a woman thinks of her husband, don't ask her; simply look at her when he is about.

WHISK: To move nimbly from place to place.
Whiskey: That which is moved nimbly from place to place.

THE PAUSE

By Gertrude Brooke Hamilton

I

IN the fleet of automobiles subservient to the swing of a traffic-signal, two cars were momentarily held cheek-to-jowl in Fifth Avenue.

Serena Grainger gave her husband an amused side-glance.

"Isn't that the girl?" she said, of the other car's occupant.

Paul nodded, a scarcely perceptible shadow shifting across his face. The steering-wheel gave him an excuse for keeping his eyes ahead. He watched the signal, waiting for it to turn from STOP to GO.

Serena's half-glance included the next car and its driver—a woman younger than Serena, not nearly so charming, but pretty, in a round-cheeked, blue-eyed way. Just now, the blue eyes resembled china saucers set in a pinkish shelf and the round cheeks were showing flags of distress. Idly cognizant of Paul's rigid profile, Serena was inclined to catch the blue eyes in sympathy as the crossing-sign swung, and the motors moved forward.

"She's gone ahead of us, Paul," smiled Serena, reassuringly.

Favouring him with a survey that made her brows a straight, dark line over eyes that could merge from grey to violet-black, "What cads you men are in such moments!"

Paul was obliged to laugh at the embarrassment that had kept him from speaking to Greta Delf, daughter of a Staten Island innkeeper; a little more than friend, a little less than *amourette*.

He took up his wife's badinage, with an undernote of friction.

"If that had been Horace Priestly's car in the hold-up—out with it, what would you have done, Serena?"

"Why, I'd have spoken," she replied evenly.

"And risked my displeasure?" he teased without mirth.

"Rather than risk his discomfiture." Her shrug showed the trifling stock she placed on any irritation her very good-looking husband might show.

Paul was silent, taking the sweeps of asphalt with a tongue-click under his close-cropped moustache. He turned into one of the East Sixties and ran over toward the tall and exclusive apartment-house which, for a tall and exclusive rental, afforded the Graingers a home of a trifle too many rooms and baths.

Both Serena and Paul had acquired, of late, a horror of being crowded together, of there not being room enough to avoid each other when the mood so moved them. Their honeymoon was a good many moons gone. And the moons of the last year or two had been disposed to send their sighs in diverse directions—his out to a certain commodious inn in the village of New Dorp, hers to the town of Absecon, where Horace Priestly studied plant-life in a laboratory set in semi-isolated surroundings. Which goes to show how imperceptibly, yet swiftly, the moon can reflect new honey.

Their car ran under the motor-porch of the apartment-house. Paul had picked Serena up in the shopping district. She had suggested Ceylon and pastry at her favourite tea-place; he had preferred home—though it might not have been the ultimate goal of his ride.

"Be civil enough to taste my home-

brew and sweets before taking the car to the garage," begged Serena, white-gloved hand on the door; "or I may quite forget how you look in a social *tête-à-tête*."

Over the turn of her shoulder, "And isn't it time for some sort of conclave Paul?"

Lately, there had made itself felt between them a pin-pricking desire for talk plainer than either of them were accustomed to indulge in. So Paul followed his wife through the revolving doors and into one of the elevators, which lifted them to their own corridor.

Serena preceded him with her indubitable air of supremacy, of leisurely affability and surface ease.

Once the door of their apartment had closed behind them, she stretched her arms wide, letting her gold-mesh bag and several small parcels fall from them. Her delicate yawn seconded her husband's unvoiced ennui, and the slight sigh that followed seemed an echo of his desire for verbal expression.

In the drawing-room the tea-cart stood ready, against the advent of the mistress; dainty service dimpled by the stream of late afternoon sunlight flooding from the west. For persons enamoured of one another the room and hour were ideal. Serena and Paul assumed their favourite postures under a cloud of discontent.

He refused tea; she drank it.

"Out with it—what is to be done?" she mimicked him, eyes steel-grey over the rim of her cup. "We're tired of this. We're not tired of—that. What do people do, under such circumstances?"

Paul sprang a tasselled shade to the top of the window. "By 'that' I suppose you mean—?"

"Ever cowardly," she shrugged. "Out with our 'Horace' and—what's the girl's name, dear? Though her name hardly matters, for she has eyes that fly open at sight of you and cheeks that betray confusion at your coldness—"

"Oh, for God's sake!" snapped Paul, turning on her. "Can't we chuck this falderal of words? Can't we have one honest minute, Serena?"

Her glance flew beyond the drawing-room.

"Don't talk so loud, Paul; consider the scarcity of trained servants."

"Bosh!" he retorted, though modifying his voice.

He prowled the room, with one hand behind him and the other thrust into a pocket of his well-tailored trousers. He was an agile man, a bit too light weight; his face, though not devoid of humour, hinted of an irascibility which showed that there were times when his nerves made themselves felt.

Having given the best part of his life to the acquisition of his present possessions, Paul was, perhaps, now running into the rut of wondering how worthwhile any of his possessions were—he was looking over the edge of the rut into simpler gardens.

Serena, on her side, having attained the pinnacle of successful domesticity, was, it might be, wondering why she had ever aspired to anything so banal. Cleverness and social manœuvres had been demanded of her in wedlock with Paul, but the inner cells of her brain had remained closed—until a new touch promised to unseal them.

Her eyes drifted to the yellow wane that passed for twilight in the metropolis. She lifted hands which seemed weighted with their rings, letting them fall apathetically.

"I doubt," she said, "if there is such a thing as an honest moment, here; besides the secret eagerness of our servants, who would be delighted to scent rowdyism in us, there's something in the very air we breathe that's hostile to any spurt of genuine honesty."

She watched the dimming light fall aslant her rings.

Her husband folded his arms, staring down at the thoroughfare they lived in.

She continued to speak, in more or less conventional cadence. "We're in a ticklish pass, I fear. We've, in the same interim, come up against that in-

ward kick which so often undoes a civilized man or woman. Because we've struck this together, yet separately, we can each deplore the other's dilemma: your imagining yourself allured by a somewhat crude young woman, and my dreaming nights of a somewhat erudite young man. Foolishment, isn't it? For here we are, married very comfortably. Neither of us wishes to be blown out of our orbit, yet we are skidding toward some sort of blow-out."

In her laziest voice, "My dear, a halt must be called. We must pause."

She leaned back among the pillows of the divan, quiescent, questioning.

His characteristic tongue-click conveyed that he had barely listened to her flow of words. When it was borne in upon him that she had stopped talking, he gave a short laugh; was this their conclave, this modulated, feminine monologue?

He spoke with hardly pardonable abruptness as he crossed the room.

"Don't wait dinner for me, Serena. I may not be back before ten."

And he actually went off with the impetuosity of a man whose thoughts were outrunning him.

She glanced after him, brows level; was this their *tête-à-tête*, this uncivil, masculine exit?

II

Serena rang for the maid and had the tea-things removed. She then put a pillow behind her head, closing her eyes upon a room beginning to be engulfed in brief shadows. Her thoughts were, naturally, of where Paul was going; probably to a florist's or candy shop, and then over the Staten Island ferry and out to the irregular four corners of New Dorp—and to the Elm Tree Inn.

When the existence of blue-eyed Greta had first dawned on Serena she had taken the trouble to motor through New Dorp and subject it to a fleeting scrutiny. The roads in all directions from its substantial inn were excellent; and the inn's golf course, tennis courts and garage facilities attested to the Delf prosperity. Later, when luck had allowed her a glimpse of Greta Delf—at the races—she had remembered that Paul's paternal grandmother had come of well-to-do English jerry-builders, and had realized that his enjoyment of an innkeeper's daughter was possibly a reach-back to one side of his ancestry.

Had Serena been innocent of any far reach herself, she might have stemmed the inevitable ascendancy of the jerry-building side of Paul. But she was involved in an encroaching fondness for the little town of Absecon, where the handsome botanist had laboratories. She had known Horace Priestly when she was Serena Darrel, a Philadelphia bud whose blooming promised much.

In those infantile seasons she had fancied herself the victim of a fruitless love for Horace; his being a nature to consider all women more or less perishable plants and no woman worth nurturing. The day before her wedding, she had gone on horseback to Absecon, had walked with Horace through his wonderful plant-gardens, had said good-bye to him. Being a beautiful woman with lots of winnings, this unwon man had persisted in her consciousness. In the course of a half-dozen years she had chanced to be in Absecon again. The renewal of her friendship with Horace had brought about occasional tea-parties on the green of the laboratories; quiet hours among the plants; interesting moments in the test-rooms; veiled words of regret; good-byes that never turned out to be good-byes.

She removed the pillow from behind her head and held it at arm's length while she studied herself in an opposite mirror.

Her hair was blonde and sheened, her features regular, her mouth small and talkative, her eyes variable, her singularly dark brows, running straight, gave to her face an appealing seriousness. Her figure was graceful, with a

fragility that gave the effect of a hothouse bloom.

Sighing, she dropped the satiny headrest.

She dined alone, afterwards whiling away a half-hour at the piano. Between nine and ten o'clock she went to the telephone—and, before putting in a call for Absecon, shut off other communication. There followed the elaborate nightly manœuvres of toilet of her species. In bed, with a reading-light at her elbow, she opened a book Horace Priestly had written, found herself sighing over the mysteries of nature as evinced in its plant growth—and seeing his attractive, studious features on every printed page or two.

Paul returned, and went to his rooms. He opened the windows there, sending fresh currents through the apartment. Then he appeared at her threshold, saying "May I come in, Serena?"

Her finger paged the volume.

"Yes, do. Where have you been, dear?"

"To the Westchester hills and back."

He crossed his arms on a satin-padded chair, leaning on them.

She saw that he was telling the truth. "My evening has, also, been commendable." Curiously, "Did you arrive at any sort of conclusion, Paul?"

"About us? No." He drummed the chair with lean, likable fingers.

He added, with seeming irrelevancy, "Would you like to get out of town for our conclave?" In explanation of the question. "I've been thinking—you're right in saying we can't be honest here. So why not hold our talk-fit elsewhere?"

"But where?" eyebrows half meeting.

His suggestion was accompanied by strumming fingers. "There's that shack in the mountains—"

"Heavens, Paul!" she shivered. "That place?"

He nodded. "Where we spent part of our honeymoon."

"In the middle of a wood that had awful sounds in the trees!" recollected Serena. "A typical lovers' retreat. Are we in the mood for it?"

"We could talk there," declared Paul.

He laughed, straightening from the chair to stretch his arms and shoulders. "The shebang was built by my Grandfather Grainger, for what you might term his 'kick.' It was there," in some embarrassment, "that he brought a little love all the way from a shire of England."

"And from his justly outraged wife," supplemented Serena.

She locked her hands behind her head, laces falling from her pretty arms. "So it's there you think we might have an honest seance?—to learn if we care to face divorce—or," with a tinge of malice, "to look over the retreat for a second honeymoon. Eh, Paul?"

His flush showed she had hit somewhere near the mark.

Having scored, she was good-humoured about an out-of-town quarrel. "We'll start for the mountains, at your pleasure," she murmured; and reopened her book—with an apology for the action.

III

SERENA made ready for the trip into the mountains. As most of their acquaintances were still in town, Serena felt called upon to explain the outing. "A man is so fidgety at this season of the year, my dears."

Motoring away from New York, neither Serena nor Paul was very sure of the move; it did seem rather silly, in broad daylight, to travel miles for a spot to squabble in.

The journey was made swiftly as possible, provisions for a short mountain sojourn being stacked in the car at the village nearest their destination. Each was inclined to blame the other when it began to rain very hard. They were sorry they had come. Yet they went on, because they had come.

The shack, in a wet mountain wilderness, made Serena shiver and Paul click his tongue.

He housed the motor under a projecting rock, while she unlocked a

water-sogged door that opened with difficulty. The interior was darkened by the weather, it smelled woody, and was old enough to tumble down over her head; she groped about, finding the lamp. Paul brought provisions and kerosene from the car.

In stumbling over a chair he knocked from it a portfolio loosely held together by faded ribbons.

"Look," he said rather in irony, "our heads were once close together over this."

Serena laughed. "So they were."

The lamp murkily illuminated the two rooms with no bath, seats piled with dusty skins, windows hung with cobwebs, an unswept fireplace, and a bed built in the wall, with coverlets the colour of it.

She unwrapped her motor veils, taking off the becoming bonnet and finding a peg to hang it on. Paul built up a fire and busied himself with the cooking apparatus he had purchased the day before. Soon the place smelled of broiling bacon and firewood. Serena dried out by the fire, more than once putting her hands over her ears to shut out the unmodified sound of the rain.

The meal was a poor one, served *à la* primitive. The disused chimney flue sent occasional spurts of wood-smoke into their faces. They had forgotten the coffee. The spring water Paul drenched himself to fetch tasted so brackish that she swallowed only a sip of it.

"Yet—when we were in love . . .!" Her glance embraced each rude intimacy of the place, as they sat before the fire and felt the black night close down.

Paul humorously reached for the portfolio he had knocked from a chair. "It belonged, if you remember, to my grandfather's love." He untied the ribbons, opening the folder across his knees in a manner that derided its sentimental contents.

"I half remember," assented Serena; glad of an opportunity to stare, violet-eyed, at the fire.

Paul took up a fragment of yellowed verse; delaying, perhaps purposely, the confab hanging over them. "They say in the family that my grandfather's light-o'-love was very fair, very young and untutored in the ways of any world but his."

He read aloud, with his short laugh:

"Summer is stirring the heart of things,
Summer that came with you;
Dim in the dusk a firefly wings,
Loud in the dark a cricket sings,
Soft in the night a hundred things
Lie drenched in the verdant dew."

"Tosh!" shrugged Serena. "Such fools are not bred nowadays. Women do not give themselves away to such an extent."

She put out amused fingers and drew the sheet from him, finishing the lines—

"Summer will go from the heart of things.
Summer will go with you;
Phosphorus will fade from the firefly's wings,
Silence will fall where the cricket sings,
Into the host of vanished things
Summer will vanish, too."

Paul got up and prowled about the shack. The fire burned lower. The lamp smelled of a charred wick. Gusts of rain came down the chimney, scattering the heat.

"Come, come," said Serena at length; "we've motored an uncomfortable route. Is the séance to be a silent one, Paul?"

"No," he replied, without turning. "Start the clacking, Serene."

Her question sounded oddly distinct in the raftered rooms.

"Shall we be divorced?"

His reply was as direct.

"If we were, what would you do?"

"I'd follow the 'kick' that made your grandfather seek this solitude with the lady of the portfolio. I'd marry Horace, and be steeped in intelligent isolation."

Her glance strayed to a blackened

roasting-fork that hung by the fireplace.

"You, Paul," coolly, "would wreck your social life by forming an alliance with china-eyed Greta, who could, no doubt, broil you a beefsteak over the fire, should you honeymoon here."

In the wake of such honesty, Serena stooped to cover a slight grimace by plucking chance leaflets from the old portfolio.

"Listen to these lines," she said soothingly; "the long-ago little castaway evidently had happy moments."

"Now we are free in great hills of singing
Winds, bright lowlands, and sun-shot grass!"

Shifting the conglomerate sheets, her brows were pensive. "There were other moments less happy, I fancy; times when she perhaps regretted the 'light kick' that had shot her into a strange country."

Her voice followed a scarcely legible scrawl:

"I have a letter from England,
From over the bright, blue sea.
I've broken the hearts in the homeland.
It breaks the heart of me!"

Paul came from the window, and picked up a sheet protruding from the loosened bulk.

"The man and woman game seldom varies," he remarked. He read:

"One or the other, it seems, must tire.
Build the fire! Higher! Higher!"

She matched his quizzing smile with another fragment from the old love-folder:

". . . Can this be we?
We, who have lain here, heart to heart?
. . . Touching calm hands!
As old, blind men might part!"

She let this rhyme fly into the fire, watching its flare-up and fleck of white ash.

"I've half forgotten all of the tale on which this shack was built," she observed. "Was she a poetess?"

"Only during her high holiday, I imagine." Paul, too, had watched the brief flame and speck of ashes. "She came from a vicarage in Derbyshire and the broken hearts she rhymed of were, no doubt, those of her ruddy parson father and marriageable young squires."

Serena let her fancy revolve around the picture. "I imagine she was the incarnation of summer; a primrose-and-white-ash maiden, whose dreams ran over a hawthorn-hedged existence. And your grandfather?"

"A younger son, married into a family of wealthy jerry-builders; his escapade in eloping to America came to a sorry end, as my grandmother followed the truants and never rested until she had him back. She browbeat him into becoming a waistless sot, prone, when in his cups, to recite foolish love-verses into any handy feminine ear. It is said that my grandmother even thrashed him at times."

Serena gave him a contemplative side-glance. "And the white ash in the episode?"

"Nobody knows what became of her," answered Paul, holding her glance. "Women who climb out of hedged existences leave few tangible records."

Her eyes glinted to volatile grey.

"Probably she became a stage favourite and died effectively at Baden-Baden; or it may be she returned to England and married a left-over squire, contenting herself with feeding berried ivy to blackbirds."

With a delicate flip of her toe she closed the portfolio. Another rhyme of a long-ago idyll fell out:

"The rose that bloomed in crimson sweep
Along our radiant way,
Has lost the red she longed to keep;
Summer could not stay,
And we who followed passion's quest,
We, too, must go our way—
One to the East, one to the West;
Summer could not stay."

Serena shredded the thin paper. "And her season here," sighing, "became inconsequential, as she lost her waist-line and forgot her love-verses. Tosh, my dear, is what any of us say of dead summers."

Paul's admission was brief. "True."

There was silence save for the down-pouring rain. The firelight played fitfully over the bed built in the wall, the table out in the room, the folder of time-worn verses on the floor, the flames, embers, and ashes in the hot pit of the fire.

In the pause their thoughts began to follow the unprofitable channels of passion.

"My dear Paul," remarked Serena, touching the portfolio with the tip of her boot, "how many men and women have lived before us! Reached back and failed to recapture summer moonshine! Tried to steal more than their portion of sweets!" Very low-voiced, "To borrow this dead verse of youth: the seasons constantly change from green to grey, and back again to green; our senses follow the shifting seasons. Prosily—aren't we on the verge of making fools of ourselves?"

Paul was frank. "We may be."

She clasped her hands about her knees, speaking with some vehemence.

"In all honesty, we crave new experiences, with new mates. Vulgar, isn't it? Rowdyish. Even though we avoid undue immorality by invoking the modern-day courts, we may be rudely pulled about. And for what? For new moons that may not drip honey any longer than our familiar moon shed sweetness on us!"

She rose.

"Don't you think we might get back to town to-night, Paul?"

In coming to his feet his summary was dry. "Here where there are no servants to listen to us, I have no desire to shout at you." Consulting his watch: "By all means, let us make the effort to return to-night."

She reached for her veils, shaking them out with graceful hands. "If it isn't too rainy—"

He opened the door. "We can make it."

"Do," she begged, engrossed with the storm-chiffons.

Paul took up his cap and coat, and went out. Within a minute or two, he brought the car to the door. "Ready, Serena?"

"Yes."

She wrapped her cape about her and stepped through the torrents to the sheltering hood of the motor. Glancing at the surrounding isolation, "Anything is better than spending a night here!"

Paul, in the shack, blew out the light. He locked the door. At the wheel of the car, he took the mountain road cautiously, peering ahead.

"Yes, anything," he answered; long after she had spoken.

IV

THEIR journey back was a rain-swept panorama of silent villages and highroads, ghostly cars skidding through the rain-mists, danger-signals at obscured crossings, blurred bridges over audible water-courses. Then New York, eerie under the rain in the early hours of the morning.

It was near dawn when they let themselves into the apartment. By mutual consent each sought their individual quarters, tub and shower. Emerging refreshed and sightly—Paul in smoking-gown and slippers, Serena in slippers and negligée—they sank down in the drawing-room with a single breath of relief.

"Home again," gaily grimaced Serena, lolling in her chair.

Paul lighted a cigar, twirling out the match with an ironic twist of his fingers.

Presently Serena rose and went into a further room, where she set the coffee percolator going. The aroma sifted through the commodious rooms. She brought back a salver, coffee cups, cream urn and sugar jar, placing the service before him with a charming air.

They drank the fragrant mocha together, while dawn washed against their windows, grey-green.

THE MODESTY OF WOMEN

By Winthrop Parkhurst

THE difficulty of obtaining a first kiss from a woman, and the difficulty of avoiding subsequent ones are platitudes in the realm of the great labial philosophy. Yet the true significance of these two facts is usually ignored, or at any rate white-washed with a coating of euphuistic gallantry. That women by nature are less modest than men; that they are more continually conscious of their bodies; that their thoughts revolve around the central facts of life with a speed and intensity which would horrify an ordinary man did he know anything about it; that a woman's very blushes, indeed, are nothing more than sparks struck out by a sudden collision of the conventions with her innermost emotions: these are conclusions toward which an intelligent spectator of the melodrama of life is ineluctably drawn, yet from which the average male tries to run as though pursued by a nightmare.

Women, of course, are vividly conscious of this altogether ridiculous masculine shortcoming, but most of them are clever enough not to flout it. On the contrary, they publicly subscribe to it, not only for the sake of baiting their prey but, if they are wise, for the sake of keeping it after a capture has been effected.

Thus, through a delightful paradox, a woman's modesty is in reality the most sensuous and completely pornographic of all her arts.

THE KERRY LADS

By Theodosia Garrison

MY eyes were all too wary,
My heart was none too gay,
Until the lads from Kerry
Came tramping through this way,
And lodged about the village,
And helped us with the hay.

The lads that come from Kerry
Are not like lads at home,
They show you where the fairy
Dance circles on the loam,
And tell old tales and sing old songs
That lift your heart like foam.

The lads that come from Kerry
They never stay for long;
But, oh, their mouths are merry!
And, oh, their arms are strong!
And what's a careless kiss or so
To one remembered song?

PAN PASSES NORTHWARDS

(A ONE-ACT PLAY)

By John Hanlon

A BIT of woodland on the outskirts of a small town. There are many trees—birches, pines, and maples—and at the back there is a vista of an apparently infinite colonnade of trunks with sunlight filtering palely upon the greens and browns that carpet the aisles. Here and there a clump of wild flowers forms a splotch of colour.

To the right is a steep sloping bank, massed with low shrubbery, long-fronded ferns, huckleberry bushes, and what is known in the North as lambkill. In the centre and to the front of the stage is a small pool of water. It is rimmed with tall, slender reeds and several blossoming sprays of iris. To the left of this pool, about six feet away, is a large stump, its great roots half buried in moss.

The lighting is constantly shifting, a blending of greens and golds. There are many vagrant shadows, tracing fantastic patterns on the floor. The foliage rustles gently in the wind. Now and then a bird sings. Wan-winged moths and other insects drift lazily on their own adventures. The air is sweet with the complex, yet intoxicating odours of the forest.

Into this setting come two women. One is of large build, flagrantly blonde and plentifully rouged. Her vulgar face is kindly. Her apparel is tawdry, cheap, flamboyant. The other is small and dark. There is just a touch of pigment upon her lips. Her grey eyes hold a wealth of unrealised dreams. She wears a simple blue dress, pitifully shiny at the seams.

The large girl flings herself upon the stump with an emphatic sigh. Her name by adoption is Jackie Delrome. She is a chorus girl with a burlesque company which is limping through the small towns.

JACKIE

Gawd! And they stuck this burg on the map. It oughta be put away in mothballs for keeps. Why, dearie, I ask you, did we drag our legs out *here?*

(The other has been gazing around her with a glowing face, stooping sometimes to pick a flower. Her name is MADELINE. *She also is of the chorus, though the reason is hard to understand.)*

MADELINE

When the man at the hotel told you there was a park, you seemed eager enough to come out.

JACKIE

Park! This ain't no park! Where's the rides, where's the men, where's the midway and all the people? Park! It hands me a laugh. A cemetery has three rings compared to this dump.

MADELINE

I think it's wonderful!

JACKIE

Then so is Hoboken and Mauch Chunk and Oskogee! How can people live in such holes without growing moss instead of whiskers?

MADELINE

You mustn't say horrid things about this wood. I love it. It's just like the one at home.

JACKIE

Dearie, don't you never get tired of warbling that "Home, Sweet Home" stuff? Listening to you, you'd think no other song was ever wrote.

MADELINE

It's true, though.

JACKIE

Huh! If truth meant anything, most of us Janes wouldn't be wrenching our shoulders shimmying for a bunch of hicks and letting a gassy press-agent call us "Venuses." No fear! We'd be shoving soap and a bucket across some office floor at two plunks per.

MADELINE

We might be happier.

JACKIE

Happier hell! Haven't I shook two perfectly good husbands to come back to draughty dressing-rooms and darned tights? The thing's got me. You can't get away from it!

MADELINE

I wish I felt the way you do. I'm afraid I don't belong. Watkins called me down again last night.

JACKIE

That's the best little thing he does, the wop! His motto is: "Forget she's a lady, just remember she's in the chorus."

MADELINE

All the same he's right. I'm very stupid.

JACKIE

That don't cut no ice! Don't you get the way the Johns lamp you? Dearie, when it comes to shape, you've almost got it on me, and, believe me, there ain't a burlesque show on either wheel that wouldn't put me in the front row, if the heads wasn't down on me because I insist on being refined when they tell me to rough things up. Why, when I was with "The Queens of the Corset Department"—

MADELINE

I don't belong, really. I'm lonely. I can't ever seem to fit in. Back home it was different. I wasn't quite happy, but when things were too bad I could always run out into the woods. Somehow I was never lonely there. I seemed to have thousands of friends all around me . . . Jackie, do you believe in fairies?

JACKIE

Sure, when they wear silk shirts and diamond headlights. I ain't never been able to cop none though!

MADELINE

Not that sort! The kind you used to read about in the nursery books! Lovely creatures that were always smiling and never grew old! People like Peter Pan!

JACKIE

The guy that flopped with his single on the Loew time?

MADELINE

No! Barrie's make-believe boy, who never grew up. I want to be like him. I always want to be young. I never want to grow hard and bitter.

JACKIE

If you're set on staying sweet, you chose a hell of a profession!

MADELINE

That's where I made my mistake. Home on the farm everything was so small and everyone was so narrow. They couldn't, they wouldn't understand; and they pretended so many

things were true that really were lies. I thought the stage was so different. I thought that its people were really themselves, that they loved one another for what they were and were happy in making other people forget their troubles. I imagined they were all Columbines and Harlequins romping along a glorious gipsy trail. I found I was wrong. They pretend more off than when they're on, and they're as bitter as anyone else.

(JACKIE, *somewhat bored and somewhat irritated, has been endeavouring to dissuade ants from climbing up her vivid stockings. She now rallies to the support of her profession.*)

JACKIE

Dearie, if your words wasn't so refined, you'd be a lady Billy Sunday. As for us pretending, who the hell do you think would book us if we didn't shoot the bull! And bitter! These one-night stands would make St. Peter want Sanatogen. What with tights that get Jacob's ladders, and punk hotels, and Johns with pint-sized rolls, who could stay sweet, I ask you, who could stay sweet? You've been swallowing bunk from the *Ladies' Home Journal.* Stick to the *Billboard* like I do, dearie. Ideas are dangerous things for a chorus Jane.

MADELINE

I should have been more sensible but I thought the stage could give me what I wanted and I was fool enough to think I could get somewhere. That's why I ran away with Simpson. I believed he felt I had talent; I never thought of the other thing. Things like that hadn't touched my life. Of course after what happened I couldn't go back home.

JACKIE

Gee! You might be singing in the choir and dissipating at pie socials! Some rapid life!

MADELINE

I miss my woods so much. When I was tired, I used to play that every flower, every tree was a fairy. Sometimes, if I sat very still for a long, long while, I could almost see them.

JACKIE

I seen a pink alligator once after twelve Bronxes!

MADELINE

You wouldn't understand! You lived in the city when you were a child. There aren't fairies in the city.

JACKIE

I guess there ain't! I waited up all one night to see Santa Claus, and all I got was a wallop from the old man when he come home with a package of wet goods inside him. I thought the old fuzzy-bearded guy was too fat to get down the chimney . . . Gee, where do the kids hang their stockings in flats, where there ain't nothing but gas ranges? (*She gets up.*) For Gawd's sake, let's beat it. This simple life has turned my stomach, and this blamed stump has left its visiting card on my spine.

MADELINE

Where else could we go?

JACKIE

Look over the John crop! Men's the same everywhere, even if they're only half portions.

MADELINE

I'd rather not.

JACKIE

Pretending you're little Eva, pure and spotless? We might nab a ride in a Ford or an ice-cream soda or something!

MADELINE

You run along, Jackie. I just want to stay here for a while and think.

JACKIE

My Gawd, and you a chorus girl! Dearie, our futures lie in our ankles, not in our brains. "Toodle-oo," says Gwendolyn the vamp, as she goes forth to snatch a regular devil in overalls. And Maddy, if you meet a real nice

fairy, ask her to get me a job at the Winter Garden. If I got the chance I could make all the rest of them birds look like small-time cripples.

(*With a raucous snatch of ragtime song, she is gone. Silence falls upon the woodland save for the rustling branches.* MADELINE *kneels beside the pool. She takes off her coat and lets down her long black hair. She speaks softly to an iris blossom, which she cups in her hands. While she is speaking, a strange, wistful music, like the faint melody of a subterranean stream, is heard off stage, at first very distant, very indistinct, but gradually growing louder.*)

MADELINE

Little fairy friends of mine, have you forgotten all about me? I've been away for such a long, long time. I've been looking for happiness and freedom and love and beautiful things; but I've only found mud and bitterness and paths that can't be retraced. I have ashes now where I used to have dreams, just because I tried to make them real. Worst of all, soon I won't even be able to believe in you. I wish you could steal me away, like they say you do in the stories—take me away before my soul is quite dead. I am so very tired and getting so very hopeless. Can't you steal me away and save me?

Long ago they used to say that Pan ruled the woods and that he would help people who called him. I wonder if he would. I wonder if he would hear me if I called him. (*She becomes tense, half rising to her feet.*) Pan, dear Pan! Men have forgotten you, but I remember. Won't you listen to me? Won't you help me to find the truth that I am seeking?

(*The strange music is in the wings now; it ends in a joyous, exultant burst of sound, followed by unearthly silence; even the leaves are still.*

(*There is a sharp rustling among the bushes on the bank and a man's head appears, elfin, with a certain feminine touch of beauty. Over the brow and ears gold-brown hair is curling.*)

MADELINE

(*Breathing deeply.*) Oh!

(*The newcomer does not speak; but the keen black eyes bore through her, and the red, red lips are half curved in a subtle smile. In the trees above a robin pours forth ecstatic trillings. Other birds join him and soon the whole wood is athrill with music. In a single graceful bound the man leaps to the stage. He is nude to the waist, and his legs and haunches are shaggy. His flesh is a delicate brown, with glints of bronze.*

He stretches his hand to MADELINE *and they dance, he with the allure of a leaf tossed on a playful wind, she awkwardly at first. Through the trees nymphs are seen dancing, not human figures, but merely suggested by swirling filaments of vari-coloured chiffon and constantly changing lights of the softest tones. At the end the dancers spin madly round and round.* MADELINE *falls exhausted.* PAN *is not even out of breath.*)

MADELINE

(*Faintly.*) Who are you, and why have you done this?

PAN

Need you ask?

MADELINE

No. But I was only pretending.

PAN

Deep down in your heart you believed and you called me. It was just in time. Soon this place will know me no longer, for nowadays Pan is an exile. The tide of the town creeps relentlessly onward. Soon men will be here, they will have taken even this from me. They will lie and cheat, and stand upon soap boxes and spit out torrents of platitudes. I cannot endure men. They are lower than worms; yet they have driven out the gods and set up their own images.

MADELINE

I didn't really think you'd hear me. I don't know just why I called you.

PAN

Because I called you first. Once in your old wood, when you were a child, I kissed you as you lay asleep among the ferns. That marked you as mine for ever. Since then my voice has been ringing in your inmost heart, calling you after me.

MADELINE

So it was you all the time! You caused the unrest that kept me always seeking impossible things, that wouldn't let me be like other people.

PAN

I had chosen you as mine. You could never be anything else!

MADELINE

Why didn't you take me then? Why have you kept me waiting so long? It would have saved me so much.

PAN

Your hour has not yet come. Pan must mate with many, not with one. To-day I come for you.

MADELINE

What became of the other?

PAN

(*Pointing to a sapling which has been bending toward them.*) Her dance with me is ended; she has become a dryad like all the others. She was a beautiful woman; she will become a beautiful tree, and trees are more beautiful than women.

MADELINE

What will you do with me?

PAN

Men are close at my heels. I must flee northward, far, far northward, where for years they will not annoy me. You shall come with me. We shall roam my kingdoms together, dancing through the reedy shallows of azure inland oceans, lying upon the highest peaks of mighty mountain ranges and looking over a vast world where man is a stranger. I shall capture stars to twine through your hair. I shall weave you gowns of sea mist and dye them in the sunset. You will know love and freedom such as mortals cannot dream of.

MADELINE

But after that?

PAN

You are like all women; you would know the ending of a tale before its beginning. After that, our days of roaming done, you shall become a birch tree leaning far out over quiet waters drenched in moonlight. Birds girdling the world on frail wings will rest among your branches and gossip of their journeyings. Each twilight you will dance with the other dryads and, sometimes, I shall come with my new love and let your caressing boughs watch over us.

(MADELINE *has been listening in rapture, but a shadow crosses her face. She is silent for a moment.*)

MADELINE

When the tree dies—?

PAN

You are the tree!

MADELINE

But my soul—?

PAN

What is a soul? A phrase of black-frocked sophists.

MADELINE

To die with the tree and then be nothing; that would be terrible!

PAN

Think of the years of joy before it. Some of my trees are a thousand years old. I alone can give you happiness. Here you have paint, emptiness, the unknown; I offer certainty, ecstasy and afterwards rest, for annihilation is rest. Which do you choose, you who have called me?

MADELINE

I—

(*Her words are interrupted by a crackling in the underbush.* PAN

motions to her to hide. A man with an axe comes on. He cuts down the sapling. There is a cry poignant with despair and anguish audible only to PAN *and* MADELINE. *The woodsman fells several other small trees, and there are eerie moans and whispers. His work over, he walks away whistling. There is a horrible silence, shattered only by his thin notes.* MADELINE *touches the stump of the sapling. She screams. Her hands are flecked with blood.*)

MADELINE

No! No! You said a thousand years!

PAN

Fate is stronger than I. He alone of the old gods is unvanquished by man.

MADELINE

One day for her, just a few hours! It might be the same with me. O God in heaven, help me!

PAN

You need not pray for help. I am not the kidnapper they make me out in the tales of old wives. My mates must come of their own free will. Which do you choose? Happiness or sorrow?

MADELINE

No! No! Don't tempt me! You shan't have my soul!

PAN

So be it and farewell!

(*He stands beside the pool. A great shaft of light falls on his head and breast.*)

MADELINE

(*Involuntarily stepping toward him.*) Where are you going?

PAN

I have dallied too long already. My trail lies open. I have other mates chosen who will not refuse me. You have turned away from Pan; our paths have parted. Yet you will never be able to forget me. My kiss is on your brow, my call in your heart. You will see the happiness of what-might-have-been and you will go mad.

MADELINE

You are a fiend!

PAN

Perhaps—perhaps I am the god that all are seeking. Now I go, far, far away from the haunts of men. As they follow me, murdering my dryads, chaining my nymphs to drive their factories, I shall fly farther, farther, until at last, when they have robbed me of everything; when my name is not even an echo, I, too, shall be nothing; and without me the world will dry up into dust and crumble, for I am beauty, I am its life!

(*He plunges into the pool. In the distance the music of the pipes is heard diminuendo, still buoyant, but with a sadness that was not present before.* MADELINE *has sunk sobbing upon the moss. She rises, her arms outstretched blindly.*)

MADELINE

O Pan, come back to me!

(*She kneels beside the spring, but there is no answer. The pipes are silent now. The strident voice of* JACKIE *is heard in the distance.*)

THE CYCLE

By Mifflin Crane

I

GLADYS worked at a small table, one of a row of similar tables, stacked up with the finished pasteboard boxes. Her task was to press down the flap already creased by the machine and pass it into the open end of the box. It was then transferred to the finished pile at her left and the simple operation was repeated on a fresh box.

The work began at half-past seven in the morning and at noon there was an hour for lunch and conversation, if she chose, with the other girls. At that time they all went to the stock room, where they sat around on packing cases, in groups or alone, eating noisily, screaming to one another across the room, giggling, telling secrets, and making each other laugh with jokes. They were nearly all young, and nearly all had hopes.

She liked this lunch hour in the stock room, because, in some uncomprehended way, it seemed significant: the laughing faces, the jibes, the crude raillery, the shrill chatter had all the suggestive colour of life. At their work they were dead, the automatons of necessity, but here, freed from all meaningless mechanical movements, each girl became alive, personalities emerged, silence passed into the communion of speech, and many a romantic dream was disclosed.

To her, as to the other girls, no topic was more alluring than the talk about boys and men. She was usually a listener then, for she had not yet experienced a significant adventure: it was the older girls who held the stage. Sometimes they merely told, with a frankness gilded by an assumed sophistication, simple incidents concerning their latest boy.

"Gee!" someone would begin. "I met a real fella last night! I was about to go into the movies when—" and everybody was willing to listen.

But better than narrative they liked generalization. They gave their opinions on love and its merits, on men and their ways. Often, in such matters, a conflict of authority developed. For instance, it was held by most that if you let a man "get fresh," he would lose his respect for you, and all your chances of marrying him would be lost. On the other hand, a few contradicted this and they gave low-voiced testimony about some of their married friends, which was heard eagerly.

After the lunch hour, Gladys frequently went back to her work in a mystic mood, for the talk there made her dream. Her little hands, folding the endless boxes, performed their task without any effort of her will, and so her mind was free to embrace the shadowy delights that drifted through her thoughts like warm mists.

In these moments her hopes were very high, with no doubts to depress her. It seemed then that the felicity they all wanted would come to *her* most surely; somewhere she'd discover tenderness, and the vague sweetness without a name; someone would want her, someone would find her precious.

So, after the stimulating talk of the lunch hour the remainder of her day passed more quickly; she did not find the afternoons especially irksome. At

half-past five a loud whistle blew, and then, with a startling swiftness, chaos seemed to impose itself upon the silence and industry of the workroom.

The girls became alive again. They ran past the tables screaming to each other; they jammed their hats upon their heads as if now the second of a momentous escape had arrived. Out into the corridor they formed into a pushing, laughing, irregular line and as each passed before the time-clock she rang off the hour of her departure.

There was always an ardent race to see who would be among the first to leave the building. Sometimes Gladys was one of this lucky group and then, after the urgency of achievement, she would stand out on the pavement a moment, panting, and looking about her with sparkling eyes.

The streets were full of emerging workers: girls from the box-factory, boys and men from the mills nearby. At the corners you could see swaying groups waiting for the inadequate trolley cars. A dishevelled and strident life had sprung up in the streets, fabulously. Gladys enjoyed these moments, finding them somehow mysterious and romantic.

She did not have to take the car herself, for her home was not far from the factory. She never hurried; she liked to pause and stare into the garishly lighted windows of the cheap shops of the district, or, even better, to gaze with commingled feelings of envy, wanting and hope at the lithographed portraits of actors and actresses displayed outside the movie theatres. In a measure, with the abounding hopefulness of her youth, she did not feel impossibly separated from these fortunate ones. Without acknowledging any specific ambition, she felt that even *her* picture might be displayed in these places at some time. Nothing was impossible in the future!

Her home was on a little intersecting street that had a character and an odour of its own. The blocks of tight houses, facing close, retained in the narrow chasm of their opposing rows a never-absent suggestion of old cooking, and, more subtly, a certain vague transpiration from the obscure activities of the people who dwelt within their walls. But Gladys was too uncritical to notice this; she always hurried up the street and ran into the house, thinking eagerly of dinner.

There was a little narrow hall, in which you would find unexpected things: a chair out of place, perhaps a box to stumble over and, on wash days, great heaps of clothes. At the end of the hall two dingy curtains hung down and concealed the dining-room and here, at this time of night, most of the family was congregated.

There were Gladys' two brothers, remote fellows with whom she had little intercourse. Her father was dead; the wife, her mother, survived as a shapeless, garrulous woman, always a little red-faced from chronic shortness of breath. Then there were her sister and her sister's husband—a pair that had interested her of late.

They had been married three or four years, and until recently Gladys had found them negligible. Then, with certain promptings and awakenings that had come to her in these past twelve months, she had begun to speculate about them, especially about her sister.

It had occurred to her quite suddenly that after all her sister had a man! That must mean mystery and romance, so she watched them and searched for it.

But, strangely enough, they seemed to be an unromantic pair, given over to commonplaces, to mutual indifference, sometimes to sarcastic squabblings. Gladys was disappointed. In some way these people were living in an error.

Dinner at the house was a noisy enactment and after the meal the family separated. The two brothers disappeared; the sister and her husband usually went up to their room, and Gladys, if she were not too tired, visited a picture theatre.

Here she always found life as she knew it must be, as it would finally

come to her. Across the rectangle of the screen there passed the shadows of unnumbered excitements, romances, and sweet, desired culminations. The plays set her to dreaming; they made her small heart beat strongly, sent carmine warmths to her pale cheeks, tingling thrills to the tips of her thin fingers, little clutches of breath in her throat.

More and more her wantings materialized. She desired the reality of these pictured moments for herself—the sweet words, the kisses, the strange, fearful emotions.

II

About a year later her romance began. It had its initiation in a way that others might have thought commonplace, but she put a glamorous construction on it.

She met him in the Autumn; it was on Hallow-e'en. A group of the girls at the factory decided to dress up and go out, for they were all eager for adventure.

Gladys cut down one of her old summer dresses, trimmed it with some cheap ribbons, discovered an abandoned cane about the house, painted it white and decorated it with a floppy bow of dingy white satin and with a little half-mask concealing her eyes, she was Bo-peep.

They all met at the home of one of the girls, and when you could hear the shrill cries out on the streets, and tin horns blowing stridently, they all set out laughing and mingled with the crowds.

They were in high spirits; everything made them laugh. When a funny costume passed they pushed each other, giggled, and pointed. Now and then a group of masqueraders would stop them, but breaking away they would run up the street, screaming and calling to each other.

Later in the evening this same thing happened: four or five young fellows, got up fantastically, blocked their way and again they tried to escape. This time the boys chased them. The group scattered; Gladys turned up a side street, screaming shrilly.

In a moment, someone seized her arm.

Turning, she faced one of the pursuers alone.

Her breath came fast, he was panting, too, and for several seconds neither of them spoke.

"Got you!" he cried, finally.

She scarcely knew how to reply. She was both eager and afraid.

"Let me go!" she said.

"I won't hurt you!"

He was half laughing, and half apologetic, and although he loosened his grip a little, he did not wholly relinquish her arm.

"Of course you won't hurt me!" she exclaimed. "You don't think I'm afraid of you, do you?"

"Then let me see who you are . . ."

"You wouldn't know me; you don't know who I am!"

"How do you know I don't?"

"Well, I know you don't! Please let me go!"

He released her now.

"Aren't you going to talk to me?" he asked.

There was something a little plaintive in his question: he was not harsh. She glanced up at him swiftly. He wore a grotesque false-face that protruded an enormous red nose; she had no idea of his real appearance.

"You look awful!" she cried. "How can I tell whether I want to talk to you or not?"

He made an immediate proposal.

"Well, I don't know what you look like either," he said. "You take off your false-face and I'll take off mine, that's fair enough."

Raising his hands, he hastily pushed the mask up over his head and Gladys stared eagerly. He was young and she liked his face; he was not bad looking. It was too dark to be sure of the colour of his eyes, but she thought that they were brown.

"Now, let me see you," he said.

She shook her head.

"Not now!"

"When?"

"After awhile, may be . . ."

"Where shall we go?" he asked.

"I didn't know we were going anywhere!"

"Well, let's walk a little bit."

He took her arm, and without resisting she let him lead her down the street. They talked in staccato sentences for a time, but finally conversation became easier and they even made certain confessions to each other.

He told her his name—it was Frank Wilde, and after some hesitation she confided her own. She knew that she liked him and already she was stirred with a vague, significant excitement. They had met each other in a really romantic way—how strange it would be, she thought, if they should become very good friends.

After a while she grew uneasy and told him that it was time for her to go home. He asked permission to accompany her and she did not like to deny him. When they reached her corner, he paused under an arc light, and still retaining her arm, turned her swiftly around so that she faced him.

"Now keep your promise and let me see who you are!" he cried.

"No!"

"Be a sport; keep your promise!"

"I never promised . . ."

"Well, let me see anyway!"

Hesitating an instant, she then raised her hand impulsively and pulled off the mask. Her hair, done into artificial curls, trembled about her cheeks. Her face flushed; her eyes, meeting his own, fell.

"Gee! I'm not disappointed!" he exclaimed.

She laughed nervously, unable to say anything. He drew her close to him again and they walked slowly down the street. Pausing in front of her house, they looked at each other a moment and then he squeezed her arm affectionately.

"Aren't you going to give me a good-night kiss?" he asked.

She withdrew her arm abruptly.

"Of course not!"

His attitude changed at once; he was hastily contrite.

"Don't be mad!" he begged. "You can't blame me! Honestly, I want to know you, Gladys. Won't you let me come and see you, take you out to the movies one of these nights? When can I come?"

"You really want to see me again?"

"I certainly do! Can I come tomorrow night?"

"No, indeed!"

"When, then?"

She speculated for several seconds, for that seemed the proper thing to do. Of course, she had no engagements at all, but there was no necessity for him to suppose that. Although she was very anxious for him to call, she hid her desire and named a remote date. He expostulated; they argued; they compromised. Then, laughing, she ran up the steps and into the house.

She passed her sister and brother-in-law, wrangling in the hall. As she went on upstairs, she thought of them with an emotion of distinct pity. How foolish they were; how much they were losing! Assuredly, she would never be like her sister!

After she was in bed, she lay with her eyes closed, but fully awake, for a considerable time. She was thinking of her adventure, thinking of the young fellow. She had met other boys, but they were all too young. He was old enough, he was interesting—and he could make her dream.

III

ACCORDING to the decisions of the stockroom, there were two methods, mainly, by which it was agreed you could make a man want you enough to marry you. Either you could be aloof, to the extent of denying all but occasional kisses, or, playing more boldly, secure him by an opposite and more dangerous course. Gladys shrank from the latter way; she preferred the demure cajolery.

The first evening Frank came she received him smiling, but with a certain

remoteness. He took her hand in the little vestibule and would have retained it had she not gently withdrawn her fingers from his own.

They walked together to the "parlour" and once seated, there were several seconds of embarrassment; it was not easy to start a conversation.

He was the first to speak.

"I scarcely remembered what you looked like," he said. "That is, you were all fixed up before, you know, and I wasn't quite sure how you'd look ordinarily."

She laughed, self-consciously.

"Now that you know, are you sorry that you came?" she asked.

"No, indeed!"

He leaned toward her, extending his hand in a caressing gesture, but she eluded his touch. She drew back in her chair and frowned a little.

"Don't!" she said.

However, the conversation was not difficult after this beginning. They talked about themselves. Gladys was somewhat evasive, exaggerated a little, pretended to a measure of gentility that did not entirely exist, but doubtless he, in his confessions, did the same. In particular she made no mention of her employment.

Three or four times during the evening he attempted to put his arm around her but on each occasion she repulsed him. When he was leaving, and they stood together in the hall, he made a determined effort to kiss her, but she wriggled out of his arms, with little, sharply-whispered exclamations of anger. But they parted with apparent friendliness.

Afterward, in her bed, she was troubled and afraid. Suppose she had been too harsh: he might never come again! She imagined what might have been his kisses—his arms encircling her as if in keeping from all the world, their cheeks touching an instant, their lips meeting at last. Lying there in the darkness a warm sweetness seemed to fall about her, like a mantle of mysterious delight. She regretted the lost chance; she turned uneasily from side to side and knew she was unhappy.

But her fears were needless, for he came again; this gave her confidence. Now that she was more assured her hours held many seconds of agreeable dreaming, little, sentimental visions, little hopes and expectancies. When the girls gave their experiences in the stockroom she listened with a knowing smile, feeling that she could add her own word, if inclined.

She even pitied some of the girls a trifle, for as the weeks passed it seemed to her that none of their lives had the promise of her own. This was an emotion that came most convincingly after the memorable evening when Frank had first kissed her.

It was a granted kiss and she knew all the warm delight of yielding. At first she had proposed only one touch of her pouted lips, but once in his arms there was no escaping. He held her tight; he took away all her breath; he kissed her again and again—and he told her that he loved her.

After this the sense of vague pity felt for certain of the girls extended to one in her own home. Often, in the evening, watching her older sister across the dinner table, a compassionate emotion stirred in her heart. Surely her sister was unhappy!

Gladys often speculated about this, wondering what her sister felt, whether she still had hopes. She regretted that they were not closer, that they had never been confidants. Once or twice, encountering the older girl alone, Gladys embraced her impulsively and touched her cheek with her lips. The sister received this unexpected caress with a mingling of surprise and indifference. The young girl was afraid to confess her own hopes and shrank from voicing the questions she longed to ask.

Then, one evening, Frank asked her to marry him.

IV

THE weeks preceding the marriage were so crowded with necessary activi-

ties that Gladys was left with little time to dream. Occasionally she regretted the hurry of the days; she wanted some quiet hours of her own, alone, musing. But these would come after fulfilment, after she and Frank were together: the thought thrilled her.

The girls at the factory did not learn of her good fortune until a few days before she left them for ever. Then there were numberless ardent congratulations: they kissed her, they pinched her cheeks, they giggled and laughed; the bolder made jokes. Gladys left them finally a little ashamed.

On the day of her wedding the whirl of sudden events became so swift that Gladys felt dizzy and the hours seemed unreal. Her obese mother, puffing like a spent athlete, went here and there through the house, attending to innumerable affairs. Her sister, rather silent, a little melancholy, Gladys thought, helped her to dress. She was married in the afternoon.

The family had gathered in the little "parlour." Gladys, strangely enough, found herself without thrilling emotions. She was tired, she was bewildered. She believed that feelings ought to come, profound and stirring emotions, but they were absent.

But when she and Frank walked out together, and then, running through a pursuing hail of rice like hounded rabbits, reached a waiting taxi-cab, she sank down at his side and suddenly experienced the first exultation of the day.

His arm was enclosing her.

She looked up into his face; their lips met.

Then she was proud, then she was glad. He was her man and the mystery of love, like a golden threshold to be crossed, was awaiting them. At that instant she felt, perhaps for the first time in her life, a real inadequacy of her imagination. Sure of their happiness, some of the promised delight eluded her, tantalized her like shadows: she wanted to vision everything and could not.

But after a while she forgot this vague torment in the reality of immediate delights. Their honeymoon trip lasted a week and then they returned to the little flat that Frank had provided.

Gladys came to it a trifle solemnly, but nevertheless with pleasure. She liked being the mistress of this place, she enjoyed the calm and leisure of it.

Yet, at the same time, she was beginning to sense that with love, at least with her love, there came some unforeseen conditions.

For one thing, she discovered the necessity of compromise, and this surprised her. As she had dreamed and believed it, lovers were graced with an infallible sympathy that made a unity of their wants. Yet in a way, she found, this was not true. Even lovers could differ in their likes, in their desires of a single instant—like other people.

It was nearly a month after she had been in her new home before her sister came to see her. Gladys showed her through all the rooms, pointed out each of her little prides, smiled, blushed. At last they sat down together on a small sofa in the cubical living room. For the first time Gladys felt that her sister was interested, was sympathetic.

"Do you like it, dear?" she asked.

"Oh, yes!" Gladys cried. "I never knew I could be so happy!"

"Are you really happy?"

"Oh, you don't have to ask that. You can see I am. I don't want *anything!* I'm sure nobody is as happy as I am. He has given me so much! It's wonderful. It's—"

She continued, with her cheeks flushed a little, her eyes widened, her slender hands clenched in her lap. Her voice was pitched high, she talked rapidly and almost a strident note crept into her speech. At that moment she was voicing, to the extent of her limitations, the dreams that now she persuaded herself this reality had fulfilled. Her sister listened, silently, her head bent down a trifle, her lips a little compressed.

On separating, the two girls kissed ardently in the hall. Gladys watched the older woman disappear through the corridor. Then, turning back into her apartment, she closed the door.

A curious enervation possessed her. She felt weak—and profoundly depressed. She recalled some of her passionate sentences, spoken only a few minutes before. The words returned to her, but in that instant it seemed impossible that she had said them. They came back like a remote voice, like an utterance from a world of unrealities. She sank down on a chair and stared at the floor.

Presently she realized that it would soon be time for Frank to come home. Frank would be annoyed if his dinner were not prepared. In a way, he was exacting.

V

HERS was a slow, scarcely realized disillusionment, for Gladys was not especially an imaginative one, and neither had her hopes been fully articulate. For many months she seemed to struggle against an indefinable barrier, maddening at moments because its nature was so vague.

Unconsciously she found herself at arms with an elusive and nameless opponent—a something that loomed before the goal of her happiness.

Her definite problems puzzled her, wearied her. The first time Frank was really harsh she hid her astonishment, but during the day and in the night, lying awake, she reviewed the incident with timid emotions of dismayed wonder.

Essentially the cause was trifling. It happened one morning: Frank was unable to find some article of dress. He blamed her, she had mislaid it. She searched ineffectually.

At last she approached him, put her arms around him, touched his cheeks playfully.

"Don't look so terribly mad, dear!" she murmured.

He pushed her away.

"It's no use bothering me now!" he exclaimed. "It seems to me you're too confounded careless. Can't you ever do anything right?"

Something had happened; some astounding fatality had come between them. The old sweetness was lost, imperceptibly, surely, like the evaporation of a precious perfume. Frank seemed to pass, by a declination she had no power to check, into indifference, even into irritation. Gladys began to observe other women, their lives, their condition. She could not bear to admit the discovery in definitely thought phrases, but in her heart she came to the appalling understanding that her life was like theirs; she was one of them.

One evening, after a visit to her sister, she returned home and went into her room. Frank was out and she was alone.

Deeply depressed, she removed her hat, her coat, and standing near her dressing table stared into the glass a moment in thoughtless abstraction. Then she became aware of her reflected face; her eyes met the eyes in the mirror.

The sight of her own face suddenly shocked her. It was unchanged! She was still young! Somehow she had expected, in that moment, an altered countenance. But the lips were still full, the cheeks were more colourful than they had been a year before, and her slender throat emerged palely, without lines, from the semicircle of her dress.

She drew closer and looked intently into the glass. Her charm was still there, only its power had departed. The confused realization of this quickened her breath, and she felt an hysterical impulse to cry out. She understood her helplessness: what could she do, if, unchanged, she was no longer wanted?

Whilst struggling to control herself, she heard Frank come in. He approached through the hall; he entered the room. She turned and faced him.

He was grinning and it was plain

that he had been drinking a little. His eyes were bright and their glance shifted about the room. She saw that his cheeks were tinged with colour.

He seemed to be influenced by some peculiar exultation that was not wholly unfamiliar. The expression tantalized her, made her heart beat faster, and she took a step forward.

"What's the matter?" she asked.

At her words he gave her an instant's glance and turned away with a palpably contemptuous frown.

"Don't bother me!" he muttered.

He said nothing more, but began to remove his coat and collar. Meanwhile she stared at him, puzzled by his suggestive, reminiscent aspect.

Then, as by a revealing inspiration, she comprehended. More than a year before his face had often held this exultant glamour: when he had looked at *her*, when he had held her in his arms, when their lips had met. And now he came from the street with this old expression. Someone else had recreated it in his face.

After her discovery she became bitter and the definiteness of this feeling made her days more tolerable. She no longer hoped, but at least she was at a truce with uncertainty.

The realization, later on, that she was presently to have a child did not alter her emotions. For many months she scarcely thought anything about her prospective life as a mother. It seemed almost negligible.

But as the time drew nearer a certain natural wonder asserted itself. Occasionally she was afraid. She began to speculate about her child, its sex, its appearance, what its name would be. During the last few weeks she almost forgot Frank and he passed through her days like a shadow.

VI

HER baby was a girl. Lying in bed, late in the afternoon, she looked at its face. The child's eyes were closed and she breathed gently.

Already the mother saw the obvious resemblance in this small face, and knew that presently the girl would be like herself, with yellow, waving hair, blue eyes with a tinge of green, pale cheeks: there was even the same little pout to the upper lip.

At this moment Gladys was alone. In the next room she could hear her mother, a temporary resident in their flat, wheezing in her chair, asleep. There was scarcely any other sound.

She continued to look at her baby. For some reason, her imagination seemed more clairvoyant to-day and, passing rapidly over the years, she saw her daughter growing into a woman.

She realized swiftly then that not only would the girl reproduce her hair, her eyes, her lips, but all her old forgotten hopes! This unconscious one would dream some day and feel the sweet ache of wanting.

With an abrupt movement, gentle, yet passionate, Gladys moved closer to the sleeping baby and drew its head down close to her breast. This one would be protected, this one would be taught and know! All the dreams that had been denied *her*, would come to her child, surely. The thought thrilled her, almost as if the miracle of her own happiness had been then achieved.

Her senses were dulled to everything else, save the response to her inward emotion and so she was surprised to find that Frank had come home and was in the room.

He was standing near the bed, looking down at her, frowning.

"What's the matter?" she murmured.

"Women have no brains!" he exclaimed. "Pull up the bedclothes, can't you? That kid will freeze to death! She's absolutely uncovered. Won't you ever get any sense?"

She obeyed mechanically; he left the room. The baby opened its eyes and began to whimper.

Something in that plaintive cry startled the mother like the thrust of a knife. She heard her husband moving about in the corridor, grumbling to himself. The baby still whimpered.

To Gladys its pitiful little voice seemed then to have a deep signifi-

cance—and a bitter connection with the recent harshness of the man in the hall.

She saw the melancholy absurdity of her recent assurance. What could she teach the girl; what could the child learn from her?

She would grow up, like the mother; she would live in this little, inadequate flat. No doubt, later on, there would be brothers and sisters.

Frank would be able to provide for them only in this meagre way, for this child—and the others.

Gladys saw her baby repeating the cycle of her own life. No doubt, since they would always be poor, she would go to work later on, meeting, in duplicate, the girls that Gladys had known, living her own hours again.

She saw no other hope: what could she expect of Frank? And, still more bitterly, she felt her own inadequacy. She could not teach this one to live, having never lived herself. All she had had was dreams.

Yes, her child would be indeed another one, with the mother's hair and eyes, with the mother's face—and with the mother's failure.

Life would give her, too, her instant to dream, her moment of hope—and for the rest, would exact its reality.

SOCRATES

By T. F. Mitchell

THE pocket-book lay on the sidewalk, bulging suspiciously.

A hundred people, with visions of practical jokes floating before them, had passed it by in disdain. He came along. He was different. He picked it up. He was the one who was fooled.

LOVE

By Verne Bright

LOVE is a wild thing
And love is a fleet—
Love is a wind that runs
Before my twinkling feet!

Love is a glad thing
And love is a free—
Love is a bird that sings
In the heart of me!

WISDOM

By William M. Conselman

I AM knowledged and learned in the accumulated lore of the centuries. I have read from the Seven Golden Books with Ruby Clasps. I have studied the strange wisdom of the Hindu Yogi and the mystic philosophy of the Persian scribes. I can quote from the Seventy and Seven volumes of the priests of Egypt, and I have perused the visionary prophecies of the Chinese poppy-eaters.

I know why the sea is never still, and why the thunder rolls, and why the lightnings flash.

I know why mountains are tipped with snow and why volcanoes belch and roar.

I know why stars twinkle and why the moon changes.

Yea, all these things do I know.

But now I must call to my aid the writings of all the sages. I must delve into their solemn truths, and study again their dusty, wisdom-laden tomes. Perchance I shall need to call upon an oracle, that I may find the true, the perfect answer.

For Aziz, the dancing girl, Sweet Pearl of my Desire, has just asked me why I love her.

SONG

By Leonora Speyer

IF I could sing the song of the dawn,
The caroling work of leaf and bird
And the sun-waked fern uncurling there,
I would go lonely and would not care!

If I could sing the song of the dusk,
The stars and the moon of glistening June
Lit at the foot and the head of me,
The Spinner might break the thread of me!

If I could sing but the song of love,
Fill my throat with each sounding note,
Others might kiss and clasp and cling—
Mine be the lips that would sing—would sing!

THE SATANIC SAINT

By Richmond Brooks Barrett

I

CHARLES MIFFLIN adored Mrs. Preston; Tony, her son, he detested. For the woman's sake, he treated the youngster civilly, though he often longed to thrash him. After a six months' acquaintanceship with the Prestons, Mifflin had known he was in love; but somehow he could not bring himself to a confession of his state. Tony it was who scared him off again and again; the thought of harbouring such an incorrigible cross-patch in his home was quite sufficient to deter Mifflin and to act upon his passion as a dampening influence.

For three years, therefore, he had hesitated. Tony at fifteen had been bad enough; Tony at eighteen was impossible.

The boy was good-looking in a weak, queer way. Pale and rather cadaverous, his face yet possessed distinction. The features had an aristocratic quality about them. The nose in particular was fine, with nostrils that quivered. Tony's mouth, too, had a sensitive charm. It was usually curled into a sneer or a snarl; but even so it was attractive. Once in a great while it smoothed itself out; then it was of boyish fulness and gaiety. In a moment, however, it would be jerked up at a corner or stretched to a thin line of anger that gave to his countenance an expression of impatient suffering.

Tony was small but lanky, with long legs for his size and loose-hung hands. His short hair was as wiry and rich in cow-licks as a terrier's pelt. Tony was born to untidiness; no amount of smoothing had ever been effectual. He always seemed rubbed-up and tousled. This distressed his mother and annoyed Mifflin.

Few men in the universe were of sleeker appearance than Mifflin; he would not believe that anything but downright neglect could render a human being ragged to the extent that the boy was ragged. As a matter of fact, Tony in baggy tweeds was not a whit more slouchy and moth-eaten than Tony in the bath-tub with the soap-suds just washed off. Combing and scouring had not the slightest effect, that was all there was to it.

Had Tony's disposition been sweet, his eccentric appearance might have been forgiven; but he was snappy and waspish to a degree. He made a point of insulting his mother every time he spoke to her. Mifflin, too, was treated in a most high-handed and insolent manner by the cub.

Tony was in a perpetual sulk; he lounged about the house, trailed dirt over everything, and, while his ill-mannered dogs yelped at people's heels, indulged in caustic comments that were no more pleasant to his mother's guests than were the nips his pets inflicted. Strangely enough, he was the idol of the servants. He bullied them all unmercifully and by so doing won their unqualified esteem. Menials, dogs and horses bowed before him and received his vicious kicks with humility.

Mifflin's dislike for the ruffianly youngster was bitter; but he could not help admitting to himself that Tony was an interesting, even an absorbing, study. The older man felt, as he fo-

cused a keen scrutiny on the other's perverse bad nature, something of the criminologist's intentness. Repelled as he was, Mifflin yet found in the end that he was quite as much fascinated by the son as by the mother. On the one hand, there was enthusiastic admiration; on the other, a cool and objective curiosity. Mifflin, always suave and polite with Tony, kept as it were a scalpel ready for use when occasion arose.

Mrs. Preston's attitude towards Tony was puzzling. How had it happened, Mifflin wondered, that such an abnormally savage person had resulted from the healthy and altogether pleasant surroundings furnished by his mother? For Mrs. Preston was of a nature positively sunny; her vigour and her quiet enjoyment of everything were remarkable.

The gentle forbearance with which she treated her son evoked amazement; she ignored his irritable flashes and in every way sought to make things comfortable for him. Nobody was allowed to chivy the boy in her presence. Mrs. Preston never lost with him the cordiality as of perfect understanding and frank equality. It was immensely pathetic, Mifflin told himself, often, this striving on the woman's part to strike out a spark of some sort from the youth.

One afternoon Mifflin, finding Tony alone in the library, sought to reason with him.

"Look here, Tony," he began, "I want to talk to you for a bit."

He sat down quietly on the divan beside the boy and waited.

Tony replied with a curt nod.

"Wait till I finish this poem," he said, indicating the book he held. "I don't want to leave it in the middle."

"All right." Mifflin took the rebuff with perfect calmness.

Tony went on with his reading.

"Great stuff!" he commented as he tossed the volume aside.

It was obvious that he addressed himself rather than Mifflin.

"Carew, eh?" Mifflin nodded and examined the boy with shrewd appraisal. "'A Rapture' is a charming thing in its way."

Tony responded with a wry smile. "You think I'm ashamed of myself, don't you?—caught in the dirty act and all that rot. Well, I'm not a damned bit ashamed."

He twisted his mouth into a faint sneer.

Mifflin ignored the taunt.

"A charming thing," he repeated. "That sort of outburst is meant for the very young, it seems to me. When you're grown-up, you know, you won't get the thrill out of it you do to-day."

Tony greeted this with a jeer.

"I suppose you think I've only *read* about things like that!"

"True," admitted Mifflin.

"Well, you're mistaken," announced Tony and flashed him a glance of scorn.

"Perhaps." Mifflin's tone showed he was not by any means convinced. "However, let's drop it. I don't believe in confidences of that particular kind between a chap and a man old enough to be his father. We keep certain things for fellows of our own age, Tony."

"Thanks awfully." Tony arranged the pillows and reached for his pipe.

Having lit up, he put out a hand once more for Carew.

"You won't find another 'Rapture,'" warned Mifflin. "Besides, you haven't heard what I've got to say."

"Oh, very well." Tony shrugged and shot a cloud of smoke from one corner of his mouth in Mifflin's direction. "Fire ahead, old man. I hope you don't mind this pipe; it smells no end."

"Not at all," Mifflin assured him. "That is, if you'll be careful not to aim at me."

"Devilish sorry," apologized Tony casually. "I'll do my best."

"I wanted to ask you *one* question," Mifflin pursued.

"I'm waiting to hear it," threw in Tony with insolent indifference.

"This is it." Mifflin leaned forward and gave the words an incisive distinctness. "Has it ever occurred to you

that a boy should act like a gentleman to his mother?"

"Oh, yes." Tony was unperturbed.

He stretched his legs wide apart and examined the expanse of rug between them.

Then he began to drum upon the floor with his heels.

"Of course it's occurred to me. The point is, when a fellow's spent his life in the stables and kennels, how's he going to know what *is* the gentlemanly thing?"

"That is no argument." Mifflin shook a deprecatory head. "Your mother has done her best, I'm sure, to keep you away from the stables. Your running off to them is just one of the proofs that you have refused to act the gentleman with her."

"Oh, is that so? You're *such* a wise guy," Tony mocked. "You know everything—a sort of god, eh?"

"At least I know your mother and I know *you*, Tony," said Mifflin. "It's not hard to draw conclusions, now, is it, granted you and your mother?"

"It's not hard for *you*, old man," Tony told him. "You're gone on mother, you know."

Mifflin showed a cold disapproval.

"Do you intend to get married some day, Tony?" he inquired.

Tony's frosty blue eyes narrowed.

"I certainly do," he said. "It's the comfortable thing, the safe thing."

Mifflin raised his eyebrows. "You'll have to be taught what civility is, I should think, if you wish to get a girl of your own class."

"Really?" Tony weighed it. "Well, I don't agree with you."

"You will learn to agree, though." Mifflin's brows were elevated once more, in delicate irony.

Tony brought the conversation to a close by getting up; he brushed some ashes off his coat, stretched and rubbed a hand over his chin.

"My God!" he exclaimed. "I forgot to shave this morning. I'm covered with blond hog-bristles and no mistake."

He swung around with a careless "So long," and left the room, accompanying his exit with a tuneless whistle.

A moment later, Mrs. Preston appeared in the doorway, her arms full of roses.

"Lovely, aren't they?" she commented, thrusting the flowers at Mifflin's nose.

"These are my favourites," she went on. "Dozens on a bush, you know. They are much jollier than the aristocrats from the greenhouse."

"Much jollier," he agreed. "There's something perverted about the hothouse specimens. I don't believe in cutting away every bud but one. It makes the survivor such a murderous snob."

"I feel that way sometimes," she said. "But at other times the poor single ones strike me as pathetic—lonely, homesick things, like other children."

"You mean you think they have something in common with Tony?" Mifflin shook his head and smiled at the idea.

"Yes, I do." Mrs. Preston did not smile as she replied. "Poor Tony has their sad lot, without the consolation of their beauty. You don't understand the boy; I'm afraid nobody understands him."

"I've done my best," Mifflin urged. "I've tried to make a friend of Tony; but he's so devilishly self-sufficient. He has snubbed me for three years."

"Of course; Tony snubs us all. He acts that way because he's dreadfully subtle. He wants to be loved but he's afraid people will see into his strange, yearning soul and be nice to him out of pity. It's pity he can't stand; he is very proud and very sensitive."

"Perhaps," admitted Mifflin. "Still, I don't see him in that way, to be perfectly frank. You're right, I think, in saying he is like the hothouse specimens."

Mrs. Preston smiled then, but with tender sadness.

"Dear, unkempt Tony!" she murmured. "To compare him with my gorgeous American beauties—it's ludicrous. The point is, according to you, that he is a murderous snob."

"I'm afraid so." Mifflin dropped into a chair near her and toyed with the roses in her lap. "I can't place him as the homesick only child. He seems so to relish his bad temper. Tony's not unhappy, I swear."

"Has he been rude and impolite today?" Mrs. Preston queried. "Has he insulted you?"

"No, he's been more decent than usual." Mifflin busied himself with affixing a bud to his lapel. "Why, by the way, have you never sent him to school?"

"But I have." Mrs. Preston sighed. "He wasn't happy."

"I should think he would like to rub up against a crowd of boys. He's a masculine little brute, thank God!"

"His one asset, in your eyes." Mrs. Preston was sharp. "Yes, he likes the companionship of men; witness the grooms! Nothing makes up to Tony, however, for the absence of *me*."

"He's not unique there," argued Mifflin. "You should have made him stick to school; he would have loved it in no time."

"I did my best." Mrs. Preston shrugged. "The rascal was expelled—contempt for the masters, I believe the offence was. With all his coarseness and commonness, Tony is tied to my apron-strings. He himself has been for years inventing knots that can never be untangled."

"Then they must be *cut!*" exclaimed Mifflin. "It's time he went to college; it's time you had a little freedom. This arrangement isn't good for you; and it certainly is downright harmful for Tony. You are making him selfish, it seems to me, by this devotion."

"Since he gives me absolute devotion, can I do less?" she asked.

But before Mifflin could voice an indignant protest, Tony swung into the room, his hands thrust deep into his pockets.

"Hello," said Tony, and glowered at the others.

He threw himself on the divan and occupied himself with his pipe and his volume of Carew.

Mrs. Preston got up and walked over to her son.

"Have you been shaving yourself?" she asked.

Tony made no reply. His mother ran a hand over his chin. Tony wriggled away petulantly.

"Such a poor job!" Mrs. Preston cried. "There are still some stubbly places. And you've cut yourself, too, silly boy."

Tony, with an ill-suppressed "Damn!" bounded off the divan and scuffled out of the room.

Mifflin gave Mrs. Preston a long look.

"A murderous snob!" he insisted.

"An adorable, lonely boy," said Mrs. Preston, and laughed lightly.

II

A MONTH later, Mrs. Preston and Mifflin indulged in another unprofitable argument on the subject of Tony.

"Young Mr. Braithwaite is leaving us," Mrs. Preston had remarked. "He's the tutor, you know."

"What's the trouble?" Mifflin had asked.

"Oh, a terrible row," explained Mrs. Preston. "Tony's tutors never stay with us long. The two came to blows yesterday. Braithwaite's got a black eye; the boy came out of it quite unscathed—a few scratches."

Mifflin indulged in a weary wail.

"Aren't you ever going to send the youngster to college?"

"But my dear man!" complained Mrs. Preston. "He's not prepared for college. He would flunk every entrance examination."

"Don't these transitory tutors impart any knowledge?" Mifflin wanted to know.

"Only what Tony will let them," she elucidated. "He refuses to read anything but the most indecent literature."

"So I've gathered from the boy himself," returned Mifflin. "But if these tutors would only show discrimination, they could coach him on the particular

obscenities that prepare one for college."

"Tony won't hear of mathematics," said Mrs. Preston. "He hasn't even *begun* geometry; algebra has brought so many black eyes in the past that no man would dare to suggest anything higher."

"Are you looking for another tutor?" queried Mifflin.

"In a half-hearted sort of way," confessed the woman. "I'm beginning to think it's a waste of time."

"I agree with you there. It's rather foolish to attempt the education of a boy who knows he'll get his own way in everything. It would be much better to send him abroad for two years."

"Certainly not!" She was prompt. "He would get into scandalous scrapes; he would spend all my money."

"I don't wish to pry vulgarly," said Mifflin, "but may I ask you a question?"

"Of course." She smiled a cordial response.

"Has Tony ever addressed a civil word to you?" Mifflin was earnest.

"I can't recall one," reflected the mother. "But don't you see? It isn't for me to judge the boy by what he says. I go deeper."

"And you believe, quite honestly, that he's tied to your apron strings?"

"I do." She met it without hesitancy.

"You are amazing." Mifflin frowned at her. "He spends every moment of his time with the grooms and the dogs. He runs off to New York when he wants to. He makes a point of seeing you as little as possible; and you still keep your illogical illusions."

He shook his head many times in sad resignation. "You are quite blind."

"If my blindness makes me happy, why try to show me the light?" she asked. "I am content to devote my life to him. I believe his bearishness is a pose. You can never win me to your way of thinking."

"I'm afraid I must give you up," replied Mifflin. "For three years I've been in love with you; I've tried to bring myself to the point of asking you to marry me. Tony has stood in my way from the beginning. I see now that you could never care enough for me to take such a step."

"That is true," interpolated Mrs. Preston.

"For my own satisfaction I am going to say more," said Mifflin. "Even if you *had* loved me, even if you had been willing to marry me, I should have refused to take the boy. I should have insisted that you come to me alone."

They were silent for a long moment, while they looked deep into each other's eyes.

"Have I forfeited your good-will by what I've just said?" asked Mifflin at last.

"No, no," responded Mrs. Preston. "In the future, however, we shan't discuss my son. Since you know that I shan't ever be your wife, you will be much less anxious about me. You will be less disturbed at seeing me ruin myself and Tony."

She put out a hand; he took it in all gravity.

"You are very kind and very sweet," she said. "I thank you for your interest."

III

MIFFLIN found, after the thing had been threshed out with Mrs. Preston, that somehow he could not face the future with his habitual equanimity; in the past three years he had been consciously preparing himself for a career of conjugal felicity.

Until he had met Mrs. Preston, he had been content with his comfortable bachelor existence. It had never occurred to him to consider himself solitary and lonely. He had always congratulated himself on his good sense, on his freedom from care and strain.

Now he began to feel he had been cheated; he was for all the world like a tragic widower. His house seemed strangely empty, as if a gracious presence that had dominated the scene for years had been removed of a sudden.

Mifflin found no comfort in the well-ordered establishment; he grew to hate the big, uninhabited rooms. Every time

he entered the front door, he experienced something of the panic, of the ache right in the pit of the stomach, that a child afraid of the dark suffers.

At this critical juncture in Mifflin's life, a cousin of Mrs. Preston's appeared on the horizon and offered a solution. Mifflin, who had begun by falling in love with Tony's charming mother, had ended by falling in love with the idea of marriage. His mind was so fixed upon peopling the echoing solitude of his house that he forgot his chagrin at the loss of Mrs. Preston in the determination to capture somebody else.

He *must*, above all, get for himself a woman who should take root in his land and blossom under his tending; he wanted to see something besides himself and the servants reflected in his mirrors and in his polished floors.

He therefore lost no time, when Virginia Benson swam into his ken; he swore by all the gods that he would never allow her to swim out of his vision. She it was who must hereafter occupy the centre of the universe for him.

Virginia was to spend six weeks of the summer with the Prestons. Her kinship with them was distant and vague; nobody was quite sure whether she was a fourth cousin once removed or a fifth cousin. There was much confused conjecture that got nowhere.

"Now let me see," Mrs. Preston would reflect, "your grandfather and my mother's brother were *first* cousins. That would make your father and my uncle second cousins, wouldn't it?"

Heads would nod in bewildered assent and she would proceed.

"Well, then, your father and I would be—would be—oh, dear, what *would* your father and I be, Virginia?"

Virginia, startled out of a train of thought far removed from Mrs. Preston's dissertation, would stammer:

"Why, that would make papa your aunt—I mean uncle."

"Nonsense! You're not following," Mrs. Preston would complain. "Don't you see? Your father and my uncle—" etc., etc.

It really did not matter. The interesting point was that Virginia bore a remarkable resemblance to Mrs. Preston and therefore won Mifflin's admiration before the first week of her visit was over.

Virginia possessed the same sort of aristocratic beauty as the other woman. She had not yet acquired the dignity and fine frankness of Mrs. Preston; but, being only twenty, she had the powerful asset of youth. Decidedly she was the woman for Mifflin, ripe for transplanting to his own estate.

Tony treated Virginia abominably. He ignored her for the most part, either glaring straight through her or fixing his eyes on a point above her head. When he did deign to address her, it was with a hostile sneer and a vicious intolerance.

Virginia took the insults with just the right air of cool politeness; Mifflin got unlimited satisfaction from watching the way she had of keeping her temper under control.

Never before had he itched so to collar the youngster, throw him over a knee and give him a good spanking; for after all, Mifflin decided, Tony was still in the small-boy stage, in that period of growth when nothing short of taking the trousers down and wielding the shingle can induce shame and humility.

One thing was manifest: Virginia could hold her own against young Preston. Of remarkable acquisitive power, she had succeeded in hitting the calm, equable note of Mrs. Preston in her dealings with Tony; by undaunted cordiality, she took much of the sting out of the shafts he sent flying at her. The never-ending bout between these two was a delight to watch; Mifflin got, as spectator, all the enjoyment possible out of the encounters.

Virginia at once confessed to a wonderful love for the dogs that went trooping about at Tony's heels; trained to use their teeth on everybody in the world but their master, these animals in Virginia's presence for the first time

betrayed the trust. They fell for her without delay. She would whistle them to her side seductively and then proceed to pinch their ears without mercy and to knead and squeeze their dirty paws until the beasts whined in gentle agony.

"Look here." Tony would scowl at her savagely and push the renegades out of reach with his foot. "Don't maul them like that. I don't want to have them turned into sniffling lap-dogs."

Virginia would give him a sweet smile.

"I can't help it, Tony. *Such* darlings they are."

And she would assume an expression of wistful yearning that the animals were powerless to resist. Defying the irate boy, they would sneak back to Virginia's side and plead in silence for a continuation of the pulling and tugging she inflicted on them.

"Darlings!" Tony would mock. "They're damned fools."

Whereupon he would swing away in a huff.

The dogs soon turned mutinous. They refused to throw off their allegiance to the girl. The most unmerciful thrashings did no good. In the end, Tony was forced to let them go their own way, which was always Virginia's way.

Tony himself turned his back upon the house and spent every minute of his time in the stables. On a horse's back he could dictate terms; no beast with Preston's spurs dug into its flanks dared to swerve from its course at sight of a blonde and petticoated figure.

For this defection of Tony's, Mifflin breathed out a heartfelt thanksgiving. He and the two women composed a delightfully congenial trio. They picknicked in the woods on the Preston estate and, relieved of the cross-patch's presence, had many a jolly day of it. The dogs joined with boisterous enthusiasm in the merrymaking. Mifflin was as happy as a boy. It did not take him long to perceive that Virginia liked him. He had few fears now of what the future might hold for him.

Mifflin seldom showed up now at his own house except to sleep or to change his clothes. The place no longer made him miserable and homesick, however. He liked to stand in the doorways of his rooms and picture the lovely Virginia starting up from a big chair with a gay greeting.

He could see her, in a negligée with a foamy train, sweeping over the polished floor with outstretched hands. He visualized her at the tea-table, smiling at him over the big urn while she brought to perfection the dainty brew under her hand. He could almost hear the tinkle of silver against china, the ripple of laughter the girl would toss off as she sat up quite straight and stirred the fragrant liquid in her cup. When he shut the front door behind him, he would imagine her in riding-habit at his side, two horses drawn up in readiness.

It was all very charming and rather young, Mifflin decided. Beyond a doubt, he had fallen head over heels in love with domesticity and matrimony.

His feeling for Virginia was not turbulent; it was on the other hand restrained to a degree. She was, if the truth be told, but the last article of furniture necessary to bring his beautiful establishment to a state of perfection. Without her, things somehow failed of design; with her, the pattern would be complete.

Mrs. Preston acted throughout with great delicacy. She seemed from the first to sense a romance in the air; she would therefore at the proper moment gracefully melt into the vernal background and leave Mifflin and Virginia to each other. Mifflin's gratitude was warm.

One morning, as Mifflin made his way across the grounds to the Preston house, he saw Virginia coming towards him. She was in a riding-habit; flushed and radiantly smiling, she signalled with her crop. He waited for her. By the time she had reached his side, he had forged the resolution to clinch matters without delay.

"I took the horse round to the stable

myself," she announced. "Our mettlesome Tony insists on it; one has to toe the mark with him."

"One does," Mifflin agreed and smiled. "He must make an irascible host, that boy. But *irascible* is not the word; *satanic* would come nearer to it."

When the two had reached the formal garden, Mifflin hesitated.

He waved a hand vaguely towards a stone bench near by.

"Let's sit down for a bit," he suggested. "You don't have to change yet; luncheon won't be for hours. Besides, I like you best this way; and I feel that what I've got to say can't wait."

"You frighten me!" she cried as she sat down. "Is it going to be very bad?—a scolding or a stern lecture?"

Mifflin, standing before her, laughed softly.

"By no means. It's going to be a humble but a desperate plea."

"Oh, dear!" Virginia pouted up at him. "You're about to ask a favour of me. Please don't. I hate to be put on my honour."

"I'm afraid you have no sense of honour," sighed Mifflin. "Young girls never have, when they're pretty. They know they can play fast and loose with all established codes and people will love them just the same."

"If that is true, you really can't blame us, can you?" she queried. "By spoiling us, people relieve us of moral responsibility."

"Well argued," he said. "But we're getting away from my plea. Don't you want to hear it?"

"What a silly question!" she mocked. "Since you know so much about young girls, you must be aware we're curious."

Mifflin bent closer.

"Will you marry me, Virginia?" he asked.

"Oh!" Virginia was startled.

With a flutter of long lashes she lowered her gaze from the man's face and contemplated the riding-crop she held.

Mifflin broke the tense silence.

"I'm sorry if I've scared you," he apologized. "I should have led up to the question more skilfully, I suppose."

Virginia, staring hard at the ground, shook her head. The colour had left her face.

"It's not that," she said. "The trouble is, I—I don't know what to say. It's hard to find the proper words. I—"

"Oh, never mind about the proper words," urged Mifflin. "I don't want to be answered by rote, dear Virginia. Just let what you've got to say come tumbling out. I shan't miss your meaning, I assure you."

"You are very kind." Virginia shot him a timid glance, and blushed. "I'm so silly, such a fool; I don't deserve an honour of this sort."

"Oh, please!" he cried. "You mustn't be a goose. Out with it, I beg of you."

"Very well then." Virginia straightened. "You see, I'm bewildered; I'm not used to—to this kind of thing. I've never refused a man before. I'm afraid you will be hurt, dear Mr. Mifflin."

Mifflin stared at her.

"Ah, a refusal would be a blow, I can't deny that. But I can quite understand," he lied.

Then.

"Somehow, I thought you cared."

"Mr. Mifflin," said Virginia, and her lip trembled, "I have just come from the stables. Tony has asked me to be his wife. I said, 'Yes,' because—I love him, don't you see?"

In his amazement, Mifflin stepped back, tripping over his left foot with his right one.

He grew purple with chagrin and anger.

"I'm afraid," he said, "that I don't find it in me to congratulate you. You know what I think of Tony."

"Yes, I know," Virginia replied. "You dislike him; you do not understand him."

"And you?" he asked. "*You* understand him?"

"Yes." Virginia treated Mifflin now to a calm and cool scrutiny. "You take him at his surface value; you see nothing but the boor in him. His mother

and I go deeper. We have talked about him—oh, so often and so thoroughly. We see into his fine, sensitive soul. Tony puzzled me at first, I admit; but, with his mother's help, I soon grew to appreciate his qualities, to see the pathos of his situation. He has always felt himself at a disadvantage beside *you*. He knows the social graces aren't for him; he also knows it would bring pain to Mrs. Preston—the discovery that he is tortured by his shortcomings. He is proud and won't let people sympathize. He deliberately cultivates his roughness and makes a stable-boy out of himself, because he's afraid it will hurt his mother, make her realize how he's been thwarted, if he shows there's a better side to him. Tony is at heart a true aristocrat; can't you see the tragedy for him of throwing in his lot with the grooms?"

To this Mifflin did not attempt a reply.

"It's by studying his face that one learns to appreciate Tony," went on Virginia eloquently. "I have come on him time and again unawares—in the stables. He has been standing there, his mouth drawn with anguish—racked by it, Mr. Mifflin. He doesn't deceive himself; he drops the mask when he is alone. It's at such moments that he knows his superior qualities and winces at the futility of the course he's taken. Small wonder he is irritable and vicious! I mean to convince Tony of my respect for his worth. He is deep and suspicious of everybody; it will be difficult. He can't bear sentimental pity. I feel, though, that I shall succeed; I even feel, since he's asked me to marry him, that I have succeeded. You don't believe a word of this, I suppose; all I can say is—have you ever looked straight into Tony's eyes, Mr. Mifflin?"

The sound of a hurried footstep on the gravel brought Virginia a pause.

Tony was making towards them.

Ignoring Mifflin's presence, he scuffled up to Virginia; legs wide apart and hands deep in his pockets, he confronted the girl.

"See here," he told her, "you've lamed the mare. If you can't learn to ride properly, I'll have to ask you to keep off my horses' backs."

"Oh, I am so sorry, Tony," faltered Virginia, the light of ecstasy in her eyes. "I didn't know."

Mifflin turned away and started across the lawn towards his own estate. When he was out of earshot of the others, he gave vent to a groan that was half a bellow of unreasoning fury.

Then he shrugged.

"The damned, sentimental little fool!" he muttered. "My house is too good for *her!*"

IMAGINATION

By Lawrence M. Wilson

THE room was stifling. I had to have air.

I used all strength possible but could not open the window one inch.

Creeping back to bed, I picked up a boot and hurled it in the direction of the window.

A crash of falling glass and I sank gently into the arms of Morpheus, drinking in the cool crisp air, contented. . . .

* * * * *

I think ten dollars is an exorbitant price to charge for the glass door of a small bookcase!

WOMEN AND LYING

By W. P. Thorpe

WOMEN lie more frequently than men, but the sum total of their falsehoods is probably no greater than that of the opposite sex because each individual lie is smaller. A woman will lie about the price she has paid for her hat, exaggerating it if she is talking to her friends, minimizing it if she is talking to her husband. She will lie with her eyes, with a delicate shrug of her shoulders, with a pretty wave of her hand. She will lie to the census-taker; and occasionally she will lie to her doctor and her priest. But she will seldom if ever lie for a Cause. She does not often lie to herself. And if, perchance, she lies to one man, it is usually to protect another man. So, by men at least, her sins are forgiven her.

A SONG OF CITIES

By John McClure

DEEP in the valley
Where blue-bells were,
The smoke-stacks excrete,
The great wheels whirr.

And brown birds perching
In smoky eaves.
And grey birds flitting
In smoke-dimmed leaves.

Twitter one song
From dawn till night:
"Beauty is gone
And the old delight!"

INTERLUDE

By Harry Kraus

IT was a pleasant, friendly sort of a rain. She was attuned to its every mood, loved it for its very humanness. She could see it—a jolly old person, now laughing wheezily, bellowing the sides of the tent; now dreamily quiescent, rolling its lips in a gentle tattoo on the canvas top; now chuckling, a happy, guttural sound that slowly rumbled away in its vague chest. Kind old thing. It swept the air so nice and clean, and left everything so fresh.

She offered mute thanks. Oh, if it would only rain this way every night! Then she would never have to get out and cajole the farmers into leaving their nickels at her booth. If it would only rain for a month, for thirty days, night on night, then Carey's Carnival would be bankrupt and Jim would have to go back to the city and find something else to do. Back to little old Chicago, good old Chi town, and farewell to carnivals and fair grounds and pink-scarved farmers with their polka-dotted girls.

Inadvertently she held out her hand, catching the raindrops that filtered through a leak at the ridge pole and slid down the black wire of the one dim incandescent light.

But Jim hated the rain; it meant so much money lost to him. The bread would be stale and soggy, and the meat he had ground would spoil and would have to be mixed in with a fresh mess, and that meant twice as many sandwiches to sell.

She rose stiffly from her seat on an empty vegetable crate and crossed over to the corner of the tent, where she moved a box of onions out of a pool of rain-water. Jim came in just then.

"Can you beat the luck?" he grated, wrenching himself out of his sopping coat and flinging himself on the bed. "Every time we make a live burg it rains. Every time I get a chance to clean up it rains or something. Well, why don't you say somethin', huh? You ain't worryin' yourself much, it looks."

"I can't help it if it rains, can I, Jim?"

"No, you can't help anything, not even me. How much didja make yestaday? A dollar six bits! Day before you broke even. That's a fine help. We'll get rich that way. Say, don't let that nifty farmer take any more chances. He's too lucky. He got away with five canes yesterday, didn' he?"

"Yeh."

Jim reached under the thin mattress and pulled out a bottle, tilting it to his lips.

"Empty! Drained dry!" He shot it through the tent flap. "Say, Lil, ferget what I said about your being no help to me. I didn't mean it, Lil. I'm feelin' kinda blue, thasall, and I gotta take it out on somebody. I just got enough booze in me to make me mad. You know me when I'm that way, Lil."

She nodded.

"I sent that order for another gross of canes. Gee, they're goin' fast. These rubes ain't what they used to be in the good old days, eh, Lil?"

"Not so's I could notice it."

"Aw, come on, kid, perk up. Don't shut up that way like a clam. Talk to me. Cheer me up."

"I don't feel like talking, Jimmy. I just like to sit here kinda dreaming. The rain always makes me feel that way, kinda dreamy and thinkin' like."

"Yeh, you like the rain; I know it. You don't have to work then. You like to see it rain, donchu?"

"Well, I do, if you gotta know."

"Oh, you do? A pile of a lot you care if we make anything or not. You ain't worryin' where our next meal's comin' from. Oh, no. That's fer me to worry about. You ain't made enough last year to keep yourself in clothes, do you know that? And I had to pay Carey for the concession out of my sandwich money."

"Well, whaddya gonna do about it? Get somebody else to work your cane game then if I don't suit you. See what they'll do with it. Suppose I quit on you, whaddya gonna do, huh? You can't kick me out like a dog. I'm your wife; don't ferget that. You're the one that's supposed to make the living, not me!"

"Awright, smarty, quit, and I'll make your life so rotten for you that you'll be pretty glad to have me kick you out."

"Oh, there won't be any kickin', believe me. Maybe you think I won't be glad to go. You can't make my life any rottener than it is already. I'm sick o' you and your onion-smelly hands!"

"Lil!"

He jumped to his feet, goaded by her words, and walked slowly toward her.

She turned her back to him.

"You don't mean that, Lil. Don't say it again, Lil. We've gotta live, and so's we can live I gotta make hamburger sandwiches, and hamburger sandwiches without onions is like me without you, Lil. Let's not fight, girlie. It's all my fault. It's the booze I had to-night over at Larry's."

"No, it isn't all your fault, Jimmy. It's my fault, too. I can't stand the work any more. I'm disgusted with hollerin' at the farmers all night: 'Awright, gents, right this way. The cane you ring, the cane you get. Two shots fer a nickel, gents. A genuwine gold head cane fer a nickle. This way, gents!'"

"But, Lil—"

"Oh, let's not hash it all over again, Jim. I'm sick of it, that's all. Five years on the job! Five years, Jimmie, and when we was married you promised me it ud oney be one."

"I know I did. But could I help it, hon, could I? Look at the tough luck I had."

He was back on the bed now.

"Oh, it wasn't tough luck. It was you."

"Whaddya mean me?"

"Just what I said—you. Didja have to stick with this gang for five years, didja? You knew you wouldn't have any more money after twenty years on this job than watchu had after one year."

"How did I know? Tell me that. I was figurin' on a little break of luck."

"Why didnchu figure on a little work? Luck won't getchu anywheres but work will."

"Cut out the preachin'!"

"But you're not that kind. No work for you. No, siree. Just so long as the hicks keep on eatin' your sandwiches you're satisfied; just so long as you make enough for us to live on."

"You're not fair there, Lil. You know I ain't afraid of work."

"How should I know? Didja ever try it? You talk big, that's all."

"Say, you're not such a much either. You talk purtty big, too. Wachu ever do?"

"Oh, nothin' much, nothin' at all. Just barkin' at the tank town sports fer five years, that's all. That's nothin'."

"Cut out the sarcasticals! Ain't chu satisfied?"

"Does it sound like I was? A fine way to treat a wife! Make her slave till two in the mornin', keep her on the road all her life, livin' in a tent, eatin' on the fly, pal-ing with a bunch like Mamie Quinn and her Dancing Girls!"

"Whassa matter with Mamie Quinn?"

"Oh, nothin' at all. Why didnchu marry her? You knew her before she married Jack, an' before you met me."

"Well, now, Lil, I ain't makin' no comparing between you and Mame."

"You better not. She thinks she's a regular gol-ding-it because she played

with a leg show for one season on the Sunflower Circuit."

"She sure does. So does Jack. Always braggin' about her looks. That one-legged soak! He gotta right to brag. He's lucky somebody married him. Even Mame. Why, I ain't stackin' her up against you, Lil. She's not a woman; she's a—"

"Don't say it!"

"She's got spunk, tho'. She's workin' and makin' money fer both of 'em. Jack sports around in his young roadster."

"Well, you gotta kick comin'?"

"Oh, no. Not me, Lil. I guess Jack deserves the car and more, too, considerin' how he ain't perticular about who he marries. But I am, ain't I, Lil? Mame's a spunky girl, though."

"Meanin' I ain't, huh?"

"Well, you ain't overstocked with getup and go, Lil."

"I don't claim to be; I don't want to be. I don't fit in this game. I wanna home in a real town. That's what I want an' that's where I fit. An' you gotta give it to me, Jimmie, d'yu hear? I've earned it. We've been pretty good pals, Jimmie. I ain't said a word when you bought booze, an' you ain't said a word when I bought clothes an' things. We've hit off pretty good together, an' we've had our little scraps and been better friends afterwards. Jimmie, take me back to Chi."

"How'm I gonna do it? I'm damn near broke."

She was on the bed now, at his side.

"We don't need any money, Jimmie. Just take me back there; I'll show you how I'll work. Night and day—I ain't afraid. We'll find somethin' to do."

"Sure, you'll sell peanuts again in Riverview, I suppose. That's where I found you."

"You didn't think then that I wasn't good enough for you just because I was runnin' a peanut stand, didja? You wanted me pretty bad, didn't chu? Don't you remember, Jimmie, it wasn't so long ago."

"Sure I remember, Lil."

"Everything?"

"Everything."

"Remember how we planned out things? One year only we was goin' to work this game, remember? And we'd work hard and save up money an' then we'd come back and you'd buy that little cigar store on Western Avenue. Remember, Jimmie?"

"Uh, huh."

"Remember how you wanted it, how you ached for it? Remember how we used to walk past it every night, you telling me how you was goin' to fix it up with a couple o' pool tables in the back, and how what a mint it was. Remember?"

"Uh, huh."

"Well, why ain't our dreams come true? Why? We can have it the way we planned it. It's so easy. Just you take me back there, I'll show you."

"I don't see how, Lil."

"Oh, it's easy, Jim. Gimme a chance to show you. I'll do it all, Jimmie, only take me back. Little old Chi! That's all I want. Just one peek at the little old town. Just one walk down State Street. It'll all be ours, Jimmie, an' all our plans'll come out to a T. We'll have our own little flat. And at night the lights, Jimmie, and the movies, and the concerts in the parks. No more hamburgers for you, Jimmie. You'll have your little old cigar store. Won't it be swell, that little place nice and clean and lit up, and Jimmie behind the counter with a clean collar and clean hands and the pool tables in the back and the little jitneys rolling in merrily? Cantchu see it all, Jim? It's just as plain as plain. You'll have that, Jim, and all for yourself. And I'll have my flat and something else that I can't have here to drag around the road—babies! Remember, Jimmie, how we talked about that? We even had a name picked out fer him. Remember?"

"It listens good, Lil."

"It *will* be good! I'll show you how I make coffee, Jimmie, on my own stove. We'll have our breakfast on a white tablecloth with clean dishes and shining silver. And then you'll read the sporting page of a real paper in our own little parlour, Jimmie, in a nice

plush Morris chair. Can't you see it all, Jimmie? Aintchu sick of this life, Jim-boy? Dontchu feel how all this dirt and scum is crawling, crawling, crawling up to your neck and chokin' the life outa you? Ain't you so dirty you can taste it?"

"Why, Lil, old girl, you're crying!"

"I-I-I know it. I-I c-can't help it. It isn't the first time I've cried when I stopped to think of this damn life you give me. Make it be the last time, Jimmie. You can do it. Show me you care fer me, an' that you love me. Take me away, Jim, take me away from these tank towns and hicks and skin games. Take me where I can live decent. You must, Jimmie. Back there, Jimmie, little old Chi is waitin' for us. Jimmie, it's callin' to us—can't you hear it? The crowds—can't you feel them pushin' and laughin' and talkin'? The strings of lights on the boulevards, Jimmie, can't you see them shinin'?"

"Oh, Lil, I can't go back broke. We'd be bums; we wouldn't have a home. Howdyu know I could find a job?"

"Jimmie, are you gonna back out?"

"I ain't got the nerve to try it, Lil."

"I knew it! I knew it! I knew it all the time! I knew you was yellah, and you admit it, you ain't got the nerve. But you got the nerve to hold Mamie Quinn up to me and say she's got more spunk than I got. You talk about spunk! You coward! And you're a man! A man! And I married it! Oh, God!"

"Don't call me a coward! You know I ain't yellah. You seen me fight more than oncet."

"Yeh, I seen you fight, you drunk! You rat! Go out there and fry hamburgers for the hicks! You big yellah streak!"

"What licence you got talkin' about nerve? We'll see how big a dose you got in your system. I ain't got the nerve to go back to Chi broke and build up our old plans, but we'll make them dreams come true if you got the nerve."

"How dya mean?"

"Listen. If we can scrape up a big enough stake we go back to Chi. We can't do it the way we're workin' now. But there's another way. La Belle Marie quit on Izzy to-day. He's gotta have somebody to take her place. You're . . . gonna . . . take . . . her . . . place."

"You're crazy."

"Am I? It's ten bucks a night for you besides the silver you can draw from the farmers if you're smart enough to get 'em goin'. Ten bucks a night, Lil! In two weeks we'll be in Chi."

"But I can't dance."

"Aw, any girl can do a hooch. Izzy'll show you a couple o' twists in the morning. You got the goods. You can get across."

"You're crazy. You're drunk. You respect me? I'm your wife. Do you want me to be classed with Mamie Quinn?"

"Sure I respect you if you can knock down ten berries a night. You were making a big noise about nerve a minute ago. Do you wanna go back to the Big City? Here's your chance."

"I won't go back if it comes down to that. Do you think I'm goin' up there half naked before a gang of hicks? You're crazy. You're drunk. You just had enough to-night to make you mad."

"Yeh, an' I'm gonna have some more. I'm goin' to town in Jack's car and celebrate. First I'll see Izzy and get a rig that La Belle left behind for a souvenir. Whoopee! Some girl I got. Makes ten bucks in ten minutes!"

He lurched out of the tent into the rain without hat or coat. Lilly sat on the bed, half dazed, pressing her fingers to her temples, unable to effect coherent thought.

So he found her when he returned a few minutes later with a tangle of gaudy veils and scintillating glass beadings.

"Here you are, Lil. See how they fit."

"Jimmy," she answered wearily, "go out and get drunk, good and drunk, and not half shot the way you are now Then come back and sleep it off, and

to-morrow when I show you these things and tell you what you asked me to do you'll say I'm crazy."

He laughed derisively.

"And you really want me to wear this stuff? Me, your wife, wear La Belle's dirty junk."

Again the mocking laugh, and throwing the dancer's outfit at her he shouldered himself through the tent flap.

She shuddered as the jangling beads struck her knees and slithered off to the wet planked flooring. The gauzy sheaths and veilings she shook from her without touching them with her fingers. The round tin-foiled breast-plates and jewelled head-dress she kicked into a corner.

Then she threw herself on the bed and gave way to hysterical sobbing.

She cried herself into a fitful sleep from which she was suddenly aroused by a rough shaking at her shoulder.

She was wide awake on the instant.

"Hello, Eddie! What time is it?"

"One o'clock, Lil. Say, Jimmie wants to see you over at the town."

"Whatsa matter?"

"Well—he hurt himself."

"What is it, Eddie? Tell me."

"Don't be scared, Lil, it's nothin' bad. He just got banged up a little. Jack was drivin' him around in the car and Jack was as drunk as a fish. They skidded into a post or somethin', that's all."

"Was he hurt? Where is he? Hurry up, Eddie!"

"Oh, he'll be all right, Lil. He's talkin' and everything. Here, this way. I got Carey's truck."

II

It was late morning when she awoke, a miserable morning for all the shining sun. She always felt wretched after a rain, getting out of the damp bed, struggling into her damp clothes.

Gathering together the bizarre accoutrements of the dancing costume, running the beads through her fingers, folding the veils, scratching a bit of mud from one of the breast plates, she then picked her way gingerly through the ooze and sticky clay to Izzy's tent. He was in his shirt sleeves, sitting on the cot bed, smoking a complacent cigar, rolling neat cylinders of dimes and quarters into brown paper casings.

"Hello, Lilly. Say, that's too bad about Jim. How is he?"

"Oh, he'll be all right in a month or so. Busted an arm and some ribs."

"That's tough. It'll put some crimp in the bankroll, eh, laying over in the hospital that way?"

"Oh, I'll manage it all right. Have you got time to show me the dance, Izzy?"

"Oh, yeh, Jim said you was comin' over this mornin'. In a minute. Take off some of the scenery, Lil."

He eyed her as she stood before him in sleazy bloomers and clinging tunic, taking her in with the appreciation of a connoisseur.

"Gee, Lilly, you're a peach. You take the cooky. Oh, boy, wait till we hit that college town next week."

CARE: Trouble, anxiety, worry.
Caress: To court trouble, anxiety or worry.

TWIN GOALS

By Dennison Varr

TWO men set out on different trips. One chose a rocky, thorny road because he knew there was a delightful inn at the end where a warm supper and a soft bed awaited him. But the rocks wore out his shoes and cut his feet and the brambles tore his clothes and his skin. When he arrived at the inn he was too tired to enjoy the excellent supper and his feet were too sore for him to enjoy a refreshing sleep in the soft bed.

The other man chose a broad, well-paved highway, taking his time and enjoying the numerous delights along the way. No inn awaited him at the end; the road came to a stop in a wild gully. But the man lay down on the green grass, and, like a philosopher, sank into a peaceful sleep.

ASHES

By Babette Deutsch

I REMEMBER the silver colour of your room,
Gravely lined with books;
Night blowing in
Like a shadow. . . .
The tapestried chair's firm embracing arm;
The Doré threatening the delicate table
Balanced by a copper tray:
A flat flame in the gloom.
Exultant as a child
You knelt, lifting, and thrust heavy treasures before us;
Your eyes were auburn.
I remember
The room's cold colour of silver.

GROWING PAINS

By Milnes Levick

THE memory of his father was the abiding fact of his days. It gave a hallowing and precious meaning to the length of years; it rested upon him as a duty, a pleasant and manful task of fulfilment, and from it he drew the need of worthiness that was his stimulus and reward.

It was less a memory than a brave presence. He did not think about his father deliberately and with ordered processes, but lingered constantly in secret happy brooding. In the rebuffs and the elations of his shyness he turned toward him, finding a delight more subtly companionable even than in his mother. A complete and never-failing understanding laid its solace upon defeat and left his triumphs all the more for sharing them.

Often the ache to know the man that was his father walked beside the boy in solitary places and revealed to him the mysteriousness of life. At times it seemed as if an arm was round his shoulder . . . he had seen other fellows so, with their fathers. Often the presence was like a chum who answers when one shouts for joy at the smell of a meadow and capers with the tree-shadows upon the green sunlight of the grass.

At such moments the remembrance that it was but a presence would slip away from the fulness of his heart; the living knowledge was warm and palpable like the clasp of a hand. Then the inescapable fact would return like a gentle, smiling melancholy and with the sober acceptance of childhood he would look steadily upon the difference between his world and that of other boys. To do so made him happy with unashamed selfishness. They did not have such fathers, these others. He could never tell them. They could not see. That was why he liked best to be alone; there was so much they could not understand.

There was a photograph. He would gaze at it a long while, holding it to the light in both hands, but he would not let anybody see him do this, not even his mother, so that no one could laugh at the carelessness he affected before others. Behind the retouched commonplaces of the print he sought for the reality, for the soul of the man, for those strange and pervading virtues of the hero. Sometimes he gazed till he was almost dizzy and it seemed that he stood before a door that was about to open, disclosing the glorious beyond that would explain to a single glance. . . .

There was so little that he could really remember. His father used to laugh; yes. It seemed as if he was full of pranks. The farthest memory he could reach back to was of his father: his stubbly beard, with little specks of red in the light on the blonde bristles. It scratched. Not the way a hair-brush does: he had tried that and it was not like his father's beard. He could feel it now, just as it used to be when he was little. He would scream as if it hurt and his father would laugh and put him down on the floor, holding him with both hands. He must have been a jolly one. He laughed a lot. No one else laughed the way he did . . . in these memories. And there were the little paper boats and the rows of paper dolls, all holding hands, and the cast-iron fire engine. His father had

fixed it when it broke. He fixed it with a penknife. A knife with a pearl handle and a corkscrew. It was wonderful what he could do with that knife.

Only sometimes he used to come home late, when he was sick, and then he would lie down. It was just as plain now: his father, the couch, the whole dark room and the smell of it.

But it was clearer when he thought of him at play. His father would run after him and he would pretend to get frightened . . . did he pretend?—little fool! And his mother would hide him. She had a place in the games, too. His father would run after her. Sometimes she would go out into the garden and take him. It was hide and seek, she said. Other fathers didn't play hide and seek. Once he fell asleep with her in the garden. It was funny to look back: he did not think of himself as just a baby, but grown as big as now. . . . His father never seemed to win in these games of hide and seek.

He sought eagerly for recollections and was fascinated by the development of his own memory. He counted the years proudly. So many he could remember: five, six, maybe more. In another five he would be able to look back and say, "Ten years ago . . ."

He liked to talk of old times to his mother, of the penknife, the games. She did not seem to want to talk about it. Of course, that was because his father was her husband and he was dead. Folks used to say good people who were dead were in heaven, but now they didn't believe in heaven, like that. Still, he was dead and up there, somewhere.

He wanted his mother to tell him everything about his father: what he did, the things he said, how he proposed to her. He suggested these things with laughter to hide his timidity. He was proud that he could share in her past.

One day she turned from her sewing-machine and asked: "Do you really remember the hide and seek?"

"Of course." Remember? It was like asking if he remembered he had a nose.

"You were so little."

"It was a long time ago, wasn't it? I remember lots of things—way back."

"You're a big boy now." She looked at him steadily, a little quizzically.

"Nine, going on ten." This was his formula. He liked to use it jestingly because he took pride in his knowledge of the redundance.

"You're old enough to know a good many things."

He waited: the cryptic words sent a little thrill of chivalric initiation through him.

"Things you'll have to know." She seemed to be talking to herself. She hesitated, and then went on almost tonelessly, drawing him to her and smoothing his hair as if he were a very little boy. "You've spoken so many times of the hide and seek, how you and I used to hide in the garden. Well, . . . it wasn't a game."

He did not understand. He pondered upon the words: not a game. Their meaning glanced from the armour of his ideal.

"He wasn't playing, dear, when he did that. . . . It was only when he'd been drinking. . . . We had to hide."

The odour of the darkened room with the couch came swiftly to him. He had never connected that odour with his father. It had always been an unexplained, unthought of similarity. All at once he knew. Many thoughts came rushing and sprang to their places in a new conception.

. . . He mustn't let her see. He turned his head quickly and his teeth clenched. He walked slowly. The world weighed tangibly upon him from all sides and its pressure steadied, helped him on. The rooms were so big now; they swam. The photograph . . . He looked at it, without touching it. It was all blurred. Then it got clearer. He looked a long time. It remained hard and firm and lifeless, just the picture of a man. And he knew the little door would never open. There was no beyond.

"IT WAS IN MARTINIQUE——"

By Violet M. Lezard

IT was in Martinique.

Two men sat in a half-darkened room and waited.

Upstairs a woman lay dying.

Except for now and then a restless sigh or a nervous cough, no sound passed between them.

They sat and waited.

Upstairs a woman lay dying—a young thing with fair hair that fell about her face, and gave her that appearance of childishness which every trait in her character refuted.

She was fully conscious, and yet—not even on her deathbed did regret touch her heart.

She knew that in a few hours it would all be over—and still the only sorrow she felt was an intense one for herself at having to die so young and leave a world so full of gaiety and pleasure.

Life for her had always fallen in pleasant places.

Women had liked her, and men had loved her—many men had loved her, and she had responded to them all; and yet—now that the end was near, the only pity she felt was for herself.

Not an ounce of grief for the husband whom she had wronged.

Not a grain of sorrow for the lover, who had sinned with her full encouragement; and no pity for the young child she was to leave to the mercy of strangers.

She only thought how sad it was that she should die so young, and yet she half wished the end would come quickly, if come it must—before remorse should claim her for its own.

* * * * *

Downstairs in a half-darkened room two men sat and waited—waited in intense excitement, fear, and pain, for the end.

They both loved her.

Loved her as only good, strong men can love—loved her as she had never deserved to be loved. And now, whilst she gave neither one nor the other a moment's thought, they waited in almost unbearable sorrow.

They both knew.

At such a moment there could be no question of deception between such men as these.

Her husband knew.

He knew that the woman to whom he had pledged his very soul was unworthy.

She had played him false, and had done it with an airiness and unconcern that had proved her worthlessness.

Ofttimes she had come to him straight from the arms of her lover, and tried to cajole with caresses and soft words of love.

It was disgusting.

The man beside him had been his best friend—traitor and dog to steal from a friend his wife!

He knew that she had tempted that other man—tempted him beyond human endurance; but that made no difference to facts as they stood.

He was going to commit murder—he had not quite decided how, but already he felt his palms itching to get at the throat of the man who had once been his best friend.

He would wait till she was dead—it would not be long—a matter of minutes—an hour at the most—and then . . . revenge would be his!

Already the lust to kill was in his heart and the stench of blood was in his nostrils.

* * * * *

Her lover also waited for the end.

And as he waited a thrill of pity for her husband touched his heart, for although life was a tangle, her husband was certainly the most wronged of all.

The love-making that had passed between them had been of her seeking, but once established he had loved her ardently and well. With her warm lips seeking his, and her soft body nestling close, she had begged his love, and he had given it freely and willingly.

They were hurting no one—at least, that is what she told him; and even now he remembered how well she had acted the rôle of neglected wife.

Her husband was his friend—but he was so cold; besides, he would never know. These were the things that she had told him, but she had been wrong, for her husband did know, and the lover who would willingly have fought ten thousand battles for her, had she been going to live and love him still, knew now that he had nothing to fight for, except a memory that would always be tinged with shame——

He was going to kill her husband.

Decency compelled him to wait until she had passed the Rubicon, but afterwards——

And so they sat and waited.

* * * * *

Upstairs there was silence.

For some time all had been still—perhaps it was all over——

They rose stealthily and faced each other—both of them white, tense, and deadly earnest.

There was a faint rumble in the distance.

The woman heard it and shivered as she lay, but it passed unnoticed by the two men, who stood unheeding, save for the wish to kill.

Louder and louder that rumble grew, until just as the hand of each man flew fiendishly for the throat of the other—the house toppled—the world shook—and the whole city fell into the bowels of the earth.

The greatest earthquake in history had taken its toll.

It was in Martinique.

WHEN SHE HAD GONE

By Glenn Ward Dresbach

WHEN she had gone I missed a warmth of things,
A music fainted on the drifting air.
I lost the fragrance that had touched her hair
With an old magic wooed by pagan kings.
Because I lost her smile I lost the wings
That lifted me in gladness, and, aware
Of all my loss, as I went everywhere
I sought the glory that no memory clings.

When she had gone—they called me faithless then
Because I sought warmth at another's breast
And clung for music I could not forget;
Half found the haunting fragrance lost again,
Won smile on smile that failed to meet the test—
Seeking for sunlight when the sun had set!

LE TUNNEL

By Charles Dornier

DEPUIS cinq ans on travaillait au tunnel du Simplon. A Brigue, au pied du versant suisse, à Domodossola, du côté italien, ouvrant un porche d'ombre le jour, une arche de lumière la nuit, avancées de quelques mètres à peine par semaine, les deux percées s'enfonçaient pour se rencontrer au cœur du mont, selon les calculs fatalement précis des ingénieurs.

La campagne autour de Brigue était envahie et bouleversée comme par les travaux d'un siège. Le crissement des perforatrices, les détonations de la dynamite le grincement des treuils, le ronflement des dynamos, les sifflets des trains montant jusqu'aux cimes de glace avaient chassé les clochettes des troupeaux; au bord des remblais, au flanc des rocs ébrêchés, les grues énormes parmi les sapins dressaient des silhouettes de machines de guerre, et à la place des chalets isolés posés comme des joujoux sur le gazon des pentes, une ville de baraques symétrique avait soudain poussé, vraie Babel où résonnaient toutes les langues, tous les dialectes du monde.

Autour des mille boutiques, des cafés, des concerts, affluaient les équipes bariolées, mécaniciens, mineurs, terrassiers, poseurs, maçons, convoyeurs; des Français débraillés et gouailleurs, le mégot collé à la lèvre, la casquette sur l'oreille, en vêtements neutres, mais le regard hardi et l'allure originale; les Italiens, balancés sur leurs espadrilles, avec des ceintures écarlates et des chemises noires à pois blancs, la moustache sombre et les yeux brillants sous le feutre à larges bords; des Suisses roses et joufflus, la blouse serrée dans des pantalons de velours; des Allemands, haut bottés, avec des chapeaux verts ornés d'une plume d'oiseau, qui fumaient de grosses pipes à chainette et à couvercle argenté; des Anglais blonds et couperosés, à l'aise en de souples kakis: jusqu'à des nègres, dandinant, en des bourgerons déteints, de longs corps, et semblant plus noirs en ce paysage neigeux.

Des femmes, venues elles aussi de tous les coins du monde, marchandes de pain, de viande, d'étoffes, de bibelots ou d'amour, compagnes, ou maitresses de ces travailleurs nomades, excitaient les railleries ou les convoitises, peuplaient les chantiers, les boutiques et les lieux de plaisir, et parmi ces troupes aux instincts primitifs entretenaient de vives nostalgies, de vieilles chaînes ou de brusques coups de passion. Autour d'elles se croisaient des tendresses ennuyées, des lassitudes ivres, des chansons et des musiques naïves, et les éclairs des couteaux.

L'une d'elles attirait surtout les regards, attisait les désirs mâles par sa beauté superbe et tragique. Une chevelure de nuit sur des yeux de feu, une bouche fraîche comme une blessure, svelte, avec une poitrine de statue, Maria l'Italienne apparaissait à tous comme la proie idéale, celle dont l'étreinte vaut toutes les damnations. Quand sa robe passait au long des chantiers, elle élargissait derrière elle un sillage de curiosité frémissante, d'ardeurs rivales, et comme jadis Hélène sur les murs de Troie décuplait les forces des héros dans la plaine, des outils, brandis comme des armes gue-

rrières, pioches courbées en arcs, pics droits comme les lances, attaquaient plus furieusement le roc, ouvraient sauvagement le sol.

Mais nul n'osait déclarer à la belle son amour, car elle était l'esclave heureuse d'un maître redoutable, le mécanicien Antonio Marciani, un colosse, que défendait en outre une renommée de lointaines aventures. Le front barré d'une pensée fixe, les yeux d'un éclat dur de métal, mais qui regardaient souvent de biais, avec l'inquiètude sournoise des regards de taureau, il parlait peu, mais à des phrases on devinait que le couple avait traîné dans tous les coins de l' Amérique, des placers de Californie aux chantiers de Panama. Un des nègres, qui avait travaillé avec lui à la Culebra, contait que d'un coup de poing il avait fait éclater comme une noix de coco le crâne d'un gaucho péruvien qui tournait trop près de Maria. Un Italien avait reconnu dans son dialecte une origine sicilienne, mais, quand on lui demandait son pays. Antonio répondait dans un grognement: "Depuis le temps que je voyage, je ne m'en rappelle plus" Quel crime lointain, quelle peur ou quel remords poursuivait ce couple errant sur les routes étrangères? Nul n'eût su le dire, mais à coup sûr Antonio et Maria étaient liées par un terrible mystère.

Cependant le travail avançait, malgré la résistance de la montagne se vengeant par des éboulements, crevant des poches d'eau bouillante, cœur de flamme sous un front de neige. La voûte du tunnel, dans le mystère nocturne, avec son cintre de flamme, semblait une moitié de soleil couchant, une gueule de four étrange, un soupirail d'enfer.

Les rails annelés poussaient les locomotives jusqu'au fond du souterrain, et déjà les pics des deux entreprises se rapprochaient, se percevaient, se répondaient derrière l'ultime cloison de rochers comme des prisonniers se parlent en heurtant le mur.

Antonio, en tête de l'équipe, dirigeant la tarière hydraulique, redoublait d'ardeur pour abattre ce dernier obstacle, comme pressé d'émigrer vers d'autres contrées.

L'explosion de la dernière mine avait été solennellement préparée. Les équipes de chaque frontière prévenues, se tenaient à distance dans leur section souterraine. Les ingénieurs aussi étaient là, des fonctionnaires des deux pays; et, à la même minute, un conseiller fédéral du Valais et le préfet de Milan, appuyant sur un bouton électrique, déterminèrent l'explosion.

Au double coup de tonnerre, le mur s'ouvrit et, par la brèche, quand l'épaisse fumée fut dispersée, des deux côtés du tunnel définitivement ouvert, comme une longue lunette d'ombre, les spectateurs apercevaient très loin le demicintre de jour, comme une grosse étoile tremblante, et, chassant l'air glacé du nord, la brise du sud, chargée de parfum, envahit le souterrain. Par cette percée, désormais, deux lumières, deux climats, deux nations se rejoignaient, se mêlaient.

Les ouvriers maintenant se précipitaient pour déblayer les débris de l'explosion. Un jet brusque de projecteur éclaira les deux équipes au moment où elles allaient s'aborder. Et ce fut rapide comme une scène cinématographique: Antonio, qui courait en tête de l'équipe suisse, avait eu un brusque recul à voir déboucher le contremaître de l'équipe italienne, et se mettait en garde, aussitôt, car déjà l'adversaire fonçait sur lui, d'un cri de rage joyeux: "Ah! enfin, voleur de femmes! Bandit Je te retrouve!"

Antonio, pâle et terrible, avait reconnu de suite le Calabrais Beppo, l'ancien mari de Maria, qu'il avait énlevée il y a des années. Pour fuir la colère implacable de l'époux, en vain il avait mis longtemps entre eux, pendant des saisons, l'Océan. Un hasard miraculeux remettait face à face, sous un massif alpestre, à 4,000 mètres de profondeur, dans ce couloir d'enfer, les deux ennemis farouches.

Les pics énormes dans leurs mains furieuss se heurtèrent, mais la taille d'Antonio, sous la voûte grossière,

était une inferiorité, et Beppo, ramassé, souple et hardi, furieusement rué, du premier coup lui défonça la poitrine, et avec un sourire retroussé d'hyène, aux camarades qui l'empoignaient, il dit simplement: "Dommage que sa garce ne soit pas là. J'aurais aimé à faire coup double!"

"Avec les femmes, dit un Français, d'un ton sceptique, ça finit toujours par du vilain!"

Philosophe, un Allemand fit gravement remarquer que deux haines qui se cherchent finissent toujours par se rencontrer, tandis que, superstitieux comme ses aïeux romains, un Piémontais s'écriait:

"Le tunnel, cimenté par le sang, se trouve heureusement inauguré. Pour qu'une grande œuvre réussisse, il y faut une victime."

Et ce fut là toute l'oraison funèbre d'Antonio, le bel amant de Maria l'Italienne.

CHANT CONNUBIAL

By R. Jere Black, Jr.

MY husband loves me because he thinks I am innocent
Of knowledge of other men,
Of worldliness,
Of feminine guile.

I love my husband because he thinks I am innocent:
Of knowledge of other men,
Of worldliness,
Of feminine guile.

SHIPS THAT PASS

By Pauline Pfeiffer

I

"PLEASE pass the salt," said the spinster to the only eligible young man at the boarding-house table.

"Certainly," and the young man smiled straight into her eyes. In his pocket was a red rose, garnered that afternoon, which he fingered reminiscently.

II

"PLEASE pass the salt," said the spinster softly the following evening, hope in her heart, over-ripe for an acquaintanceship that might quicken into love.

"Certainly," murmured the young man absently, his eyes on his plate. In his pocket under his hand were last month's bills, gleaned from the hall table.

The spinster took the salt sadly.

"He doesn't care for women after all," she said to herself.

HIS OTHER SELF

By R. L. Fairchild

HE hit only the high spots. He used his inheritance to lubricate his way along the rosy path. He revelled among the super-revellers. He drank among the super-inebriates. His existence was a series of hops from one peak of pleasure to the next. She was the one strong influence in his life. She helped him.

TO A CABARET SINGER

By Phillips Russell

WHEN to hired music you danced
On hired legs
In which ungirlish muscles
Long ago had bent
The grace away;
When to sated men
A hired smile you cast,
And laughter rose
At capers paid for in wages,
A lonely island I
In seas of merriment—
I alone, Simone,
I alone was sad for you.

HANDSOME MEN

NOTHING so improves personal appearance as that slight smooth tan which comes with exposure to the sun and air.

"SUNBRONZE DE LUXE"

gives a perfect simulation of this tint, is **undetectable, perfectly harmless, and absolutely genuine,** to which its 5,000 testimonials received from every quarter of the globe is sufficient evidence Unique in method and perfection of result, SUNBRONZE DE LUXE has stood the **TEST OF TIME.** Forwarded free from observation, price **10/6** (*Mark II de Luxe*, **3 guineas**). Fresh Complexion Tint for Ladies, on same principle, at same prices. Direct from

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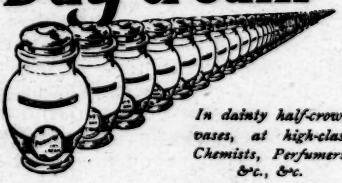
The Toilet Cream de Luxe

POMEROY DAY CREAM is, of all "vanishing" creams, the most delightful. It has a lovely effect on the skin and is so fragrant and refreshing that one wants to be using it always. Being non-greasy and vanishing it can be used any time, any day. The more one uses it, the better for the skin, which is rendered soft, smooth, and fresh, and is protected against wind and weather.

Pomeroy Day Cream



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TRY IT AT HOME ON APPROVAL

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Keeps your Hair always Smart & Trim.

Saves Valuable Time and Money.

The price is One Guinea, in case, with 6 extra blades. You can try it without charge or obligation to purchase at the offices of the Company, or send One Guinea and your name and address for home trial and approval. Money back if not satisfied.

Call or Write To-day.

Everyman's British Safety Haircutter Co. Ld.
(Dept. S.S.I.),
43, Leicester Square, London, W.C. 2.

ABOUT FASHIONS AND OTHER THINGS

By Various Hands

Dear great-grandmothers of ours!

How shocked they would be if they could see the younger generation in these emancipated days. Who would have believed a few years since that we should be wearing the harem skirt? The dear old ladies would have held up their hands in horror and dismay; but as a matter of fact, the present *culotte* is far more respectable than the very abbreviated tight skirts that have been the order of the day. They are cleverly arranged and not at all obvious. It is really more a matter of clever drapery than anything else, the material being caught together between the ankles; and when the skirt is distinctly Turkish-trouser in effect, this is usually discreetly camouflaged by long flat draperies. Whether this is the thin end of the wedge, and whether we shall eventually take to trousers, remains to be seen. It does not sound very likely. I have very acute memories of a large and very fat harem lady in an Eastern play whom the hero designated as his "sweet cactus" or "divine camel," and certainly the result in her case was not exactly harmonious. However, they have already appeared in a very modified form at dances, and in home drawing-rooms, in the latter case disguised as tea-gowns. Other skirts are voluminous about the hips, and held in at the foot by elastic, which gives with every step of the wearer. This effect can be very smart indeed, but is not really pretty or graceful. Narrow little knife kiltings are with us once more. One of the newest coats and skirts I have seen was made in thin navy cloth, with a skirt of these tiny pleats held in below by an elastic. The effect was rather barrel-like. The coat was three-quarter length and very straight and plain, and did not meet in front, but was worn open to show a large great-grandfather's waistcoat in dull floral silk. The collar was high, with a tiny frill peeping out of the top of the black satin stock. A costume of this sort needs to be worn by a particular type of ultra-smart woman to be a success, as it can so easily degenerate into a caricature. The most popular coats are again very straight and loose, a little shorter than before, but still boasting a loose narrow belt. One could fill a volume with descriptions of these beautiful belts, but quite the most charming is made of alternate strips of carved ivory and black silk ribbon.

There is an attempt to bring back the frilled coat with a full basque at the sides, but whether this will become general remains to be seen. It is a curious thing, but there is no fashion at the moment. One can wear almost any style and yet be up-to-date and well dressed. There are straight chemise frocks, frocks with panniers, draped frocks, short frocks, long frocks, artistic or of the smart variety—in fact, "any old frock!" No woman has to make the horrible choice of whether she prefers to be "becoming" or "smart," for she can be either with a clear conscience.

Girls' frocks are charming! One very advanced summer model designed for a warmer climate was carried out in pale blue and white foulard, the bodice very plain and straight with three-quarter sleeves. The skirt, which was not nipped in to the waist, was gathered all round, very few of these gathers being in the front and back, but a colossal number at each side, giving a very "hippy" appearance. The collar and wide turn-back cuffs were of the very finest tinted embroidered lawn. The collar was cut rather low and wide and was quite square, and had probably been copied from an old picture of the Stuart period, except that it was in lawn instead of point lace. This is the very latest thing in collars. Another afternoon frock was in black taffetas with the low square opening, but in this case there were several inverse little frills of tinted valenciennes edging inside the *décolletage* to break the hard

THE "HOME-MADE" CRAZE.

"WORK finished? That's splendid. Well, I'm afraid you ladies will have to be idle for a little until a fresh lot of files are ready: this comes of 'hustling'!"

And the door closed behind the back of the head of Department X. of the Ministry of Y. The four occupants of the room settled themselves a trifle more easily in their chairs. One, a slim red-haired girl, whipped a piece of lemon-coloured knitting from a drawer and bent diligently to her needles.

"That going to be a jumper, Miss Mayfield?" inquired a dark girl whose hair tumbled untidily about her ears. Then as the other nodded, "You are clever; there's a regular craze for home-made things, but I'm such an awful slacker . . . oh, *bother* my hair," she broke off, vainly trying to thrust back an unruly lock, "I washed it last night, and I can't do a thing with it to day."

"What do you wash it with?" inquired Miss Mayfield. "Not stallax, I'm sure . . . ah! I thought not."

"I do," said a pretty, fair girl who had not yet spoken. "It's simply splendid stuff."

"There," said Miss Mayfield, "I told you so. You try it next time. If you haven't any at home, a chemist will always supply it. It works up into the most lovely foamy lather and cleans your hair in no time. Afterwards it dries quickly and crisply, so that it can be done up at once . . . none of that untidy, 'endy' look, the day after a shampoo."

"Well, well," said the dark-haired one, "that's something worth trying. As we're on the subject, do any of you know a cure for falling hair? I'm convinced I'm getting prematurely bald . . . also I've got quite a little patch of grey hair—overwork, of course," she grinned.

The head of the room, a slightly older woman whose face was redeemed from plainness by the masses of soft brown hair surrounding it, sailed into the discussion. "I don't think you'll beat my recipe, Miss Carey," she said . . . "and, like Miss Mayfield's jumper, it's home-made. Get one ounce of boranium from your drug stores and dissolve it in bay rum. If you rub this into the roots of your hair at night, you will find, in a few days, that not only will your hair stop falling out, but it will grow much more thick and glossy. If you aren't joking about that grey hair, I can give you a tip which has been of great use to me personally."

"I'd be fearfully grateful, Mrs. Drewe," answered Miss Carey.

"Well," said the other, "it is not unlike the first recipe, only this time the bay rum should have pure tammalite dissolved in it. You should apply the mixture with a clean small brush, and it will gradually restore the faded part to its normal colour. Of course, this isn't a dye; I know nothing about hair-dyes, for I disapprove of them entirely. But it's a wonderful tonic."

"Thanks so much," Miss Carey said, "I ought to be a dream of beauty as regards my hair . . . Seriously though, I'm going to try your ideas . . . stallax, boranium, tammalite . . . is that right? Thanks. Miss Mayfield, what a delicious jumper that is . . . but my complexion would never stand the colour. You red-haired girls are lucky, you always have such topping skins."

"I had anything but a topping skin a year ago," replied the latter . . . "I used to freckle and burn and get dreadfully blotched-looking. Then a friend told me that mercolised wax was by far the most scientific and effective thing she knew. If it is rubbed on at night and washed off with warm water in the morning, it gradually absorbs the outer skin which has become stained and roughened, and reveals the fresh new skin underneath. It sounded rather wonderful, and so I tried it . . . and I've used no other face-cream since."

"Would you *believe* it?" murmured the facetious Miss Carey . . . "I wouldn't be half so bad-looking if I had your skin, Miss Mayfield. Is this wax very difficult to get?"

"Not a bit" said the other, "any decent chemist has some in stock. Of course, I use cleminite, too—it's such a wonderful protection to the skin, and it's so nice to feel proof against a shiny nose."

"Don't you use powder then?" inquired the fair girl.

"No, I've outgrown that. I've found something that has all the good points of powder, the smooth, velvety look, but hasn't the disadvantages of being untidy to use and giving one the appearance of being 'made up.' I bathe my face with a lotion of cleminite and water, and then I don't need to bother about powdering at all."

"Well, well," exclaimed Miss Carey, "that's something worth knowing. It sounds too good to be true. Fancy being able to enjoy a dance thoroughly without worrying if you are looking red and shiny. Lovely!"

Mrs. Drewe looked up . . . "You all seem great beauty specialists! I wonder if one of you experts could suggest a really trustworthy remedy for superfluous hair? I should like to know for a friend of mine."

"I think I know," said Miss Carey . . . "from personal experience. I once had quite a moustache. But I got rid of it by simply applying a paste that I made myself with pheminol, and never went near an electric needle, which, I believe, is very painful. It was so successful; it was all over in a few minutes and my skin never hurt at all."

"That's very interesting, Miss Carey. Would it be too much trouble just to write the name of the stuff on this piece of paper . . . and just one other thing, do you know if there is any way of curing blackheads? This friend of mine suffers from them too."

Miss Carey knitted her brows, but the fair girl said quickly: "I think most people use something called stymol, which you can buy in tablet form. It closes the pores of the skin, or rather reduces them to their proper size, and that loosens any blackheads and prevents others from forming."

"How do you use it?" inquired Mrs. Drewe.

"For blackheads I believe you dissolve a tablet in warm water, bathe them, and gently remove them with a towel. But, though I don't personally suffer from blackheads, I often have a stymol face bath. It's so deliciously sparkling and refreshing."

"Thank you so much: I am sure my friend will be very grateful," smiled Mrs. Drewe.

A step sounded in the corridor . . .

"I'm afraid this very enlightening discussion must be postponed," she continued, "I think that's the messenger with our files . . . Yes, here they come . . . we must carry on with the work now . . ."

When answering these Advertisements please mention the Smart Set

line at the neck. The same little frills appeared at the elbow. The skirt was cleverly draped, and again had a wide appearance at the hips. The newest dance frocks make their wearers look like brilliant butterflies. They are short and wide, and the particular ones that I have in mind were not only covered with many layers of diaphanous tulle, but had a scarf-like arrangement of the same draped over and covering each arm.

The ends of the scarf were caught together on to the skirt just above either hip, so that when the wearer lifted her arms she seemed to have gossamer wings, and to be floating rather than walking.

One Paris model has the hard little bodice carried out chiefly in red satin, with a very full skirt made of countless layers of black tulle, which part at intervals to reveal daring touches of red. This frock is very appropriately named the "Little Red Devil."

The big top-coats have distinctly more outline than last season's voluminous wraps; and the old-fashioned redingote cut on much the same lines as in the days of Dick Turpin, only rather more loosely, is another innovation.

Silk stockinette is to be very much used for summer frocks and shirt blouses, and promises to have a *succès fou* which is not to be wondered at by those who have seen the little model that has arrived, with its very long basque, kimono top, and waist slightly gathered on to elastic with extra drapery at the sides. The chief feature of this season's models is, as usual, to be found in the "line," which has more suggestion, though a very tentative one, of waist, a very flat look back and front, and very wide hips.

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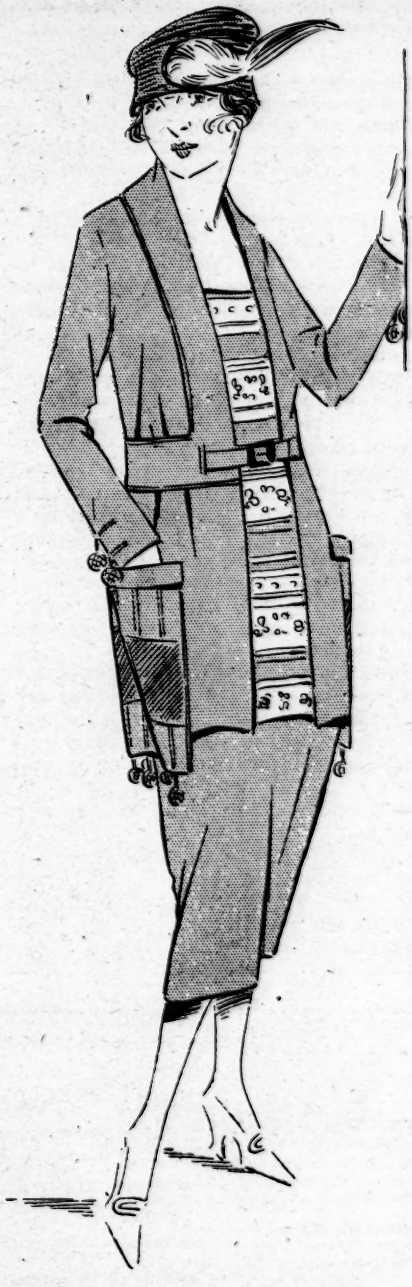
Price 14½ gns.



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There are some who are prejudiced against the idea of receiving advice about racing—but why? If you know a friend in the City—one who is in intimate touch with the right people—do you not simply yearn to ask him to tell you what he knows? Of course you do, and just as the ordinary speculator or investor needs sound advice to guide him in his operations, so does he (or she) who takes a speculative interest in racing.

And why not have it? If you want advice on law, you go to a man of legal experience to get it; if you want advice on your health, you go to an expert for it, so why not seek the advice of an expert at racing? I have owned many winners, and I get to know the business intended by a good many stables, which knowledge, combined with experience and good judgment, and the fact that I spare no outlay and no trouble which will bring WINNERS, necessarily results in profit, both to myself and to those who patronise me.

Now, the first thing to remember is this—It is of no use backing horses every day just for the sake of having a bet. The only sure way to success is to *wait*, to wait until something really reliable comes along, and that is my part of the business, and I observe it strictly. I cannot and *will not* wire every day.

Another thing is, to unalterably confine your operations to *one horse*, and never more under any circumstances whatever. Then, by following these occasional items of genuine information, strictly one horse, you can absolutely rely on beating your bookmaker, and I want you to accept my help, for I know that I can win money for you regularly.

If you are attending any meeting, or if you are staying at home and desire to take a speculative interest in any race-meetings, you cannot do better than patronise me, for I have the best men on the Turf working for me, I employ men who attend every meeting and travel the training quarters, ever on the search for winners, and I am confident that the profit of the season 1920 will surpass even that of past years. I lay no claim to infallibility, but I DO claim experience and judgment, which MUST be beneficial to my followers.

I supply the information each day that I advise anything to be done, my terms being the odds to two sovereigns each winner. Add £2 to your stake every time, and the profit of that £2 (as paid to you by your bookmaker) is what you pay me for each win, as my fee for the advice. Don't run away with the idea that the information is dear, for it is nothing of the sort. It is not what you pay for WINS that counts against you, but what you pay your bookmaker for losers, and you will win oftener than you will lose if you follow me. Moreover, the information will really cost you very little, if you add my fee to your own stake every time, as the only out-of-pocket cost to you is when the information loses, which is not often.

Intending followers must send four stamped and addressed forms (or their cost), with clear instructions for me to follow, and settle promptly for winners as due. No commissions are executed, but I can wire direct to the Agents of those who cannot personally attend to wires.

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